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ABSTRACT

This report examines transition in educational systems and identifies key policy areas in Central-Eastern European countries. It summarizes policy implications of the transition process within the educational context of these countries. Chapter 1, "Transition and Education," outlines key characteristics of the transition process and describes the context of transformation of educational systems. Chapter 2, "Transition and Educational Policy Making," explores the meaning of reform in education and describes the top-down and bottom-up models of systemic transformation of education. Chapter 3, "Investment to Effective Policy Making: The Five Points of Leverage," lists the systemic conditions of open and high quality policy making and implementation that require further development (management, assessment and evaluation, quality assurance within the school environment, stakeholder involvement and public discourse, and the capacity of actors within the system). Chapter 4, "Key Educational Policy Areas," reviews important strategy issues on the reform agendas of the Central European countries, addressing problems of decentralization and liberalization, redefinition of quality in education, education's connection with the labor market, financing of education, and equal education. Chapter 5, "External Challenges to Policy Making: Accession to the EU," discusses the educational policy implications of the European Union enlargement. (Contains 43 references.) (SM)

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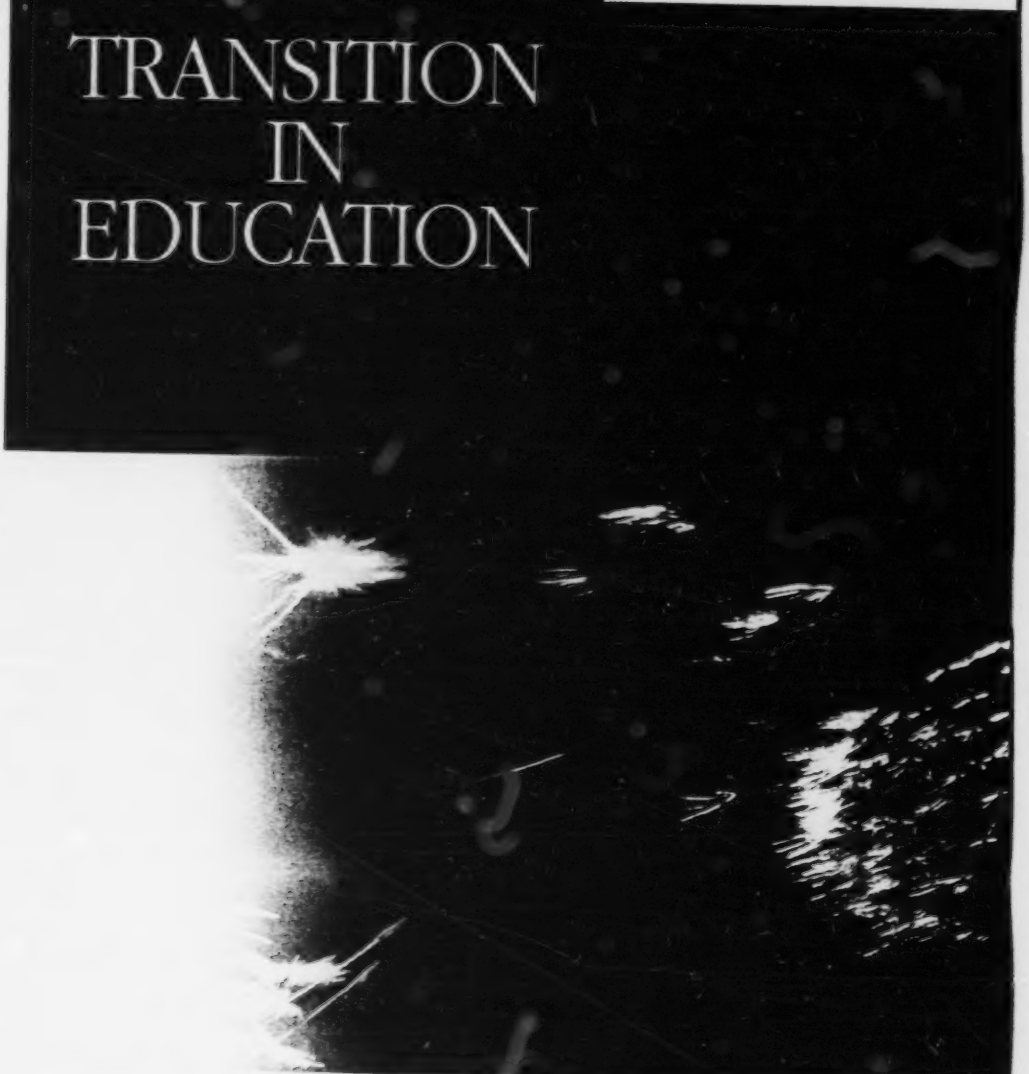

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BUDAPEST, 2001

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Policy Making and the Key Educational Policy Areas in the Central-European and Baltic Countries

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Preface

It happens too often that western scholars and consultants, when providing technical assistance in the region have difficulties to adjust to the Central-Eastern European context. Also, those educationalist, who were not socialized on the happier side of the "iron curtain" often feel, that this technical assistance is sometimes irrelevant. On the other hand, even the "language" of western public policy analysis is often not decodable for those, who never ever had to think about educational problems in terms, such as cost-efficiency, sustainability or educational accountability. A decade after the collapse of the Eastern-European "peace camp" this communication gap is still one of the typical features of this kind of international co-operation. Probably the first step in bridging this gap might be the development of en educational theory that also builds on the huge experience and knowledge that was accumulated in these countries during the last few decades.

How problems are structured is always depends on the lens trough which we view them. The problems that are addressed by this paper can be approached as sociological, pedagogical or even political matters. The perspective of this paper is a public policy one. This is the reason, why the conceptual frameworks applied in the course of the paper are not necessarily fit in to those that widely used in the Central-Eastern European literature. Also, some terminological and conceptual shifts might be caused by the fact that one of the "hidden agendas" of this opus is to reveal and investigate the relevance of mainstream educational policy theory in the CEE countries during the transition period. For example, the terminology (and the approaches behind it) used by the huge literature of educational change not always seemed to be easily applicable for the purposes and context of this overview. Nevertheless, being the purpose of this paper very practical, the theoretical implications of the problems that covered on the following pages will remain unpacked.

Almost everybody, who after reading the first version of this paper and tried to help me to finalize it, had difficulties in identifying its genre. This paper is not an "academic" analysis of the nature of educational change in the CEE countries, nor an overview that is based on the in depth analysis of the available data. Rather an overview, a compilation of the information and research result that we already have access to on the educational reform efforts of the countries in the region. In addition, this enterprise is an attempt to summarize the

experience of the author, who - in the second part of the nineties - worked as a consultant in each countries of the region. Likewise, this overview does not intends to serve as a "guide" to the policy processes of the individual countries, rather it tries to present a kind of distillation of educational change in the region. Thus, country based examples designed to illustrate the messages of this volume and to highlight the typical similarities and differences among these countries.

Sociologist doing empirical research in education while reading this paper will find that it is not properly supported with research provided evidences. The main reason for that is the fact, that public policy research is simply nonexistent in the countries of the region. In most of the cases I had to rely upon my own experience and the experience of those happy few (for example, my colleagues in the Institute for Educational Policy) who do a similar job in the region. Nevertheless, I believe that a summary of the accumulated experience at least will help formulate the appropriate questions in the future.

Since this overview is written from a regional perspective, it emphasizes the similarities among the countries of the region rather than the huge differences. Nevertheless, it is important to note that almost everything at the level of this generality has only a relative weight. All of the problems mentioned on the next pages should be carefully checked within the specific context of each country. Although several questions raised by this paper might be valid in higher education, too, the paper focuses on the policy problems of pre-university education. This, of course, doesn't mean that our scope should be based on the separation of general and higher education.

I wrote the first version of this paper in the summer of 1999. Since that, it was discussed at several occasions and I received extremely valuable contributions from experts within and outside of the region. Also, I had to revisit the paper in the light of contemporary developments and new education reform efforts in a few countries.

It is hard even to list all the people to whom I owe my all gratitude for their support. Before all, I would like to thank the critical but supportive comments of James Socknat, Thomas B. Timar, Péter Darvas, János Setényi, Walter Beveridge, Bart Maes and Cameron Harrison. I also would like to thank the serious discussion on the first version of the paper in the Institute for Educational Policy. The encouragement I received from my colleagues was always very important for me. Special thanks to Susan Wright ho worked very hard on the data that I used in the analytical parts and to Gábor Halász and Thomas J. Alexander who reviewed the final version of this volume.

Péter Radó

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Introduction

This paper attempts to contribute to the better understanding of the transition of the educational systems and tries to identify the key policy areas in the Central-Eastern European (CEE) countries. This overview might be useful if we want to identify the institutional and capacity requirements of high quality policy development in relation to the key policy issues, which deserve special attention by policy makers and international development agencies. It also tries to identify problems and obstacles, that we should be aware of in order to be able to promote informed policy development in these countries. Thus, the paper summarizes the policy implications of the broader process of transition within the educational context of these countries.

The main concern of this paper is educational policy making in the so called transition countries. Therefore, it does not shoulders the in depth analysis of any of those educational policy problems, that these countries are struggling with, rather it tries to provide an overview on the broad framework, within which the policy processes in relation to these issues take place.

This overview unfolds its subject according to the logic of moving from the general context to the concrete policy problems. The first chapter (*Transition and Education*) outlines the key characteristics of the transition process in general and attempts to map out the context of transformation of educational systems, especially the dynamics of internal and external factors of change and the different types of approaches to the transformation process in education. Finally this chapter describes the overall direction of educational change in the region in comparison to the systemic characteristics of the educational systems of the communist era. The second chapter (*Transition and Educational Policy Making*) explores the meaning of reform in education and describes the feature of the top-down and

bottom-up models of systemic transformation of education. Also, the chapter list several typical traps and shortages of the development of educational reform strategies. The third chapter (*Investment to effective policy making: the five points of leverage*) lists and attempts to unpack those systemic conditions of open and high quality policy making and implementation that requires further development: management, assessment and evaluation, quality assurance within the systemic environment of schools, stakeholder involvement and public discourse and the capacity of actors within the system. The fourth chapter (*The key educational policy areas*) contains an overview on the most important strategic issues that are on the reform agendas of the Central-European countries. Separate sections address the problems of decentralization and liberalization, the redefinition of quality in education, education's connection with the labour market, financing of education and equity in education. Finally, the fifth chapter (*External challenges to policy making: accession to the EU*) deals with one of the international aspects of policy making of outstanding importance, the educational policy implications of the EU enlargement.

The selection of the countries that are covered by this volume is based on a certain set of economic and political "maturity" criteria. The obvious target countries of this paper are those, in which educational policies have already been influenced by the requirements of the accession to the European Union: Estonia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia. The accession of these countries in the near future imposes constrains in certain areas, but at the same time it opens new opportunities. Because of the similar characteristics of the transition process, apart from the first round accession countries, the scope of this paper can be extended to Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania, as well, although the validity of several remarks will be limited in the case of these countries. An additional task in the near future will be an in-depth exploration of transition in education in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, Caucasus and Central-Asia. Russia itself seems to be the subject of a separate paper, as well.

Chapter 1. Transition and education

Summary

- The transition process in the CEE countries is the combination of three main components: (i) move from a totalitarian political system to a democratic one, (ii) overcoming the deep structural economic crisis by building free market economies and (iii) modernization and adjustment to global changes.
- The most important aspects of the transition are the legacy of the pre-communist and the communist periods, the fragile nature of the democratization process, the dramatic changes in the economic system, the rapid re-stratification of the societies, the re-definition of the role of the states and the uncertainty of values.
- The transition process is considered to be a historical opportunity to decrease the relative backwardness of the countries of the region. Due to the scarcity of resources, historical and other reasons state intervention has an outstanding role in modernization and "catching up" campaigns.
- Since educational change goes on in a fast changing environment, during the period of transition the systemic conditions of development are in the focus of educational policies, rather that pedagogical development itself.
- There is no consensus on the basic underlying values of educational policies in these countries. The typical approaches to educational policy matters are the "egalitarian", the "elitist", the "free market" and the "democratic" approaches.
- The transition process opened unique opportunities that are based on the "comparative advantage" of newcomers and the atmosphere of revolutionary changes.
- The systemic vision of the transition in education is not less ambiguous. The main direction can be characterized as a move from a "command driven" system to a "demand driven" system.
- The typical stages of the transformation process are (i) the period of rectification measures, (ii) the period of the development of education sector strategies and (iii) the period of implementation and fine tuning.

1.1. The transition process

The process of the so-called "transition" in the Central-Eastern European countries contains three main components:

- Move from a totalitarian system to a free, democratic system;
- Overcoming deep structural economic crises by moving from planned, state owned economies to free market economies;
- Modernization, adjustment to dramatic global changes.

There are two features that make this process unique: (1) the combination of these three components that are extremely challenging themselves and (2) the extremely fast speed of deep structural changes. (ITF, 1999.) These characteristics of the process, being very often controversial, impose a huge burden on the citizens of these societies in terms of individual adaptation and in terms of societal inequalities, as well. The policies aiming at transforming entire social services, like health, welfare, public administration, education, etc. should meet the requirements of all these three components and, in addition, should take into account the requirements of EU accession. Nevertheless, the "uniqueness" of the transition should be handled with care. On the one hand, all policies aiming at initiating deep changes in the public sectors in these countries should take into account the specific nature of the transition process. On the other hand, several times simple ideology driven or conservative rejection of reforms (that are based on, or similar to "western" policies) is hiding behind emphasizing the "special situation" in these countries.

This understanding of the core content and direction of the transition of the CEE countries – although, intended to be formulated in a value neutral way as much as possible – not necessarily shared in the region. For example, Richard Pachocinski, while listing the main challenges of the transition process, added "the necessity of a spiritual revival of post-communist societies on the basis of religion and universal values." (Pachocinski, 1997) It illustrates that even our view of this historical process is heavily influenced by diverse ideological agendas.

Although this paper doesn't attempt to provide an in-depth analysis of the transition process, a few of its characteristics that are relevant from the point of view of educational policies should be emphasized. The most important aspects of the transition in this respect are the following:

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- the legacy of the pre-communist and the communist periods;
- the fragile nature of the democratization process;
- the dramatic changes in the economic system;
- the rapid transformation of the socio-economic status of great masses (the re-stratification of the societies);
- the painful process of redefinition of the role of state;
- the extreme diversity and uncertainty of values.

The political, ideological and cultural alignment of the new elite is one of the main organizing forces of the political structure of the countries in the region. The three typical types of orientation are the traditions of the pre-communist period, the "achievements" of the communist period and the "western world". This "triangle" creates a dynamic framework, in which the position of individuals and political forces is considerably ambiguous.

A very typical attitude of several politicians in these countries is the nostalgic return to the "continuity" of history, which was "broken" by the communist regimes. Their policies are based on the notion, that this long period should simply be skipped. Apart from this obviously hopeless – and slowly disappearing – approach, the pre-communist past is an important source of the transition process. Among others, democratic historical experiences facilitate democratization, while the traditions of mid-war authoritarian systems can be major obstacles to it. In the last decade it was clearly demonstrated, that the values, norms and ideologies of the pre-communist period surprisingly survived the half-century or longer period of communism. Very often patterns of behavior, communication and inter-personal relationships and the dysfunctional operation of organizations, that are often regarded to be the legacy of communism, are deeply rooted in the history of these societies. In addition, states coming to existence for the first time should face the challenges of democratic transition and "nation building" at the same time.

Western scholars several times attempt to analyze the Central-Eastern-European transition by using the analogies of the Latin American or Southern European democratization. The political category of "totalitarianism", which is in the heart of these comparisons, is able to describe only the political and institutional surface of these systems. An in-depth analysis should take into account other factors, as well, for example the historical context, the huge diversity among the countries of the former communist world (that was almost completely invisible behind the "iron curtain"), the modernization pattern, which was represented by the communist regimes (modernization driven by state intervention and control), etc. The communist era is a combination of historical continuity and discontinuity at the same

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time. It means, that the communist legacy can not be dealt with as a "poisonous residue", which simply should be washed out from the institutions and the mind of the people. It should be understood that there are no magic bullets to overcome several obstacles to successful democratic transition, like corruption, bureaucracy, interpersonal distrust, lack of solidarity and disrespect of the state.

Emphasizing the importance of pre-communist legacy does not mean at all that the impact of the communist system can be underestimated. What can be regarded to be the result of the decades long communist system is the almost complete disorganization of these societies. These societies are lacking the widely shared basic democratic values that contribute to the social cohesion and the legitimacy of the state. Consequently, the main democratic devices that help to maintain stability are the institutionalization of interest (the "small islands of freedom") and the formal mechanism of bargaining among these autonomies. Until the self-organization of these societies does not reach a certain point, the multi-party political surface remains fragile. This is one of the reasons, why the assertion of "national interests" (especially in the new independent countries) plays a very important role in re-strengthening the legitimacy of the state.

Another matter, in which the communist period was quite "successful", is infiltrating public thinking with egalitarian and etatist values. The survival of these values is fostered by the fact that several achievements of this period, such as stability and relative social security, are – to a certain extent - lost. In addition, after a long period, in which the state was the only supplier of public services, not only politics, but also policy-making should be reinvented.

Another direction of alignment of the political and professional elite of these countries is the "western world". In several countries this orientation is only represented in isolated islands of "English speaking technocrats". Although these islands are backed by international organizations (such as the Soros Foundation network and other international donor agencies), their influence on policy-making is very often limited. There are other countries, in which these values and patterns are widely shared in different segments of the society but still, they represent only one of the competing value systems. For example, the set of postmodern values (such as gender equity and multiculturalism) that in the nineties gradually infiltrated almost all western "mainstream" policies are represented in the countries of the region only by small political parties and sometimes marginalized intellectual "sub-cultures". An additional difficulty is caused by the closed connection between orientation of alignment and political affiliations.

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The extent to which educational change is driven by "external" economic and social factors and "internal" specific educational factors is – due to the lack of in depth policy analysis and research – remains an open question and may vary from country to country. Nevertheless, one of the most important aspects of transition in CEE countries is the interdependence between economic and structural reforms on one side and reforms of public services on the other side. (Sandi, 1997) The extent, to which economic change occurred, predefines the extent of change in other sectors. For example, in those countries, where privatization, structural transformation of the economy and the creation of legal environment of a market economy has ended, where foreign investment is remarkable and the economy is already growing (e.g. Poland and Hungary) the challenges to educational reform are completely different, than in other countries, where only the first steps are made in this process (such as Slovakia and Romania).

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1.2. Modernization

The perception of the "state of affairs" in the CEE countries always somewhat connected to the notion of backwardness. This is the reason why all kinds of changes or reforms communicated and designed as catching up campaigns. Being located at the periphery of the developed world the history of these countries can be seen as alternating periods of backlog and catching up. The post communist era is widely considered to be a new historical chance of modernization and the integration to the Euro-Atlantic world is appears to be its main vehicle. (This explains the enthusiasm of the citizens of several CEE countries in relation to the accession to the NATO and the EU.) Therefore, modernization is not a simple issue of competitiveness and efficiency, it is rather a national issue that is approached in a historical perspective.

Modernization waves in the region typically were carried out according to a pattern-following logic. Recently, when the accession to the EU is one of the most important matters on the agenda of these countries, European patterns (sometimes phrased as "European standards") become more and more in the focus of the attention in the region. In spite of this, we should see that - in a broader perspective - the challenges of the preparation for the EU accession (the adjustment to the policies, procedural rules and overt or hidden expectations of the Union) and the compulsions and opportunities of the accession itself are one of the aspects of adjustment to global changes. (Even the integration of the European countries is driven by the same global economic, political and technological changes.) One of the hardest tasks for the political elite of the CEE countries is to develop a global view on the European integration. It is difficult, indeed, and not only because of the traditionally limited geographical scope of Central-European politicians, but also because of the huge burden and complexity of the accession itself.

Modernization and moving to a well functioning market economy are interlocked in these countries. The effects of privatization and structural changes in the economic system on public services shouldn't be explained in details here. A special aspect of this problem, however, is related to the role of states. As it was already mentioned, the Soviet type economic system (controlled from the center, without private ownership of the means of production) while served a certain ideology and a totalitarian political system, also represented a kind of modernization pattern. To a different extent in different countries, the driving force of modernization in the region was - and considered - the intervention of

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the state. (It was the pattern of the different modernization waves in the previous centuries in most of these countries.) Until recently, even in the most opened countries, modernization is considered to be – and partly is – the matter of state initiatives. Giving an example from the field of education, due to the lack of resources and the weak technology transfer, spreading the usage of information technologies in the schools is the result of large scale state initiatives, such as the "Tiger Leap" program in Estonia or the "Schoolnet" program in Hungary.

As the above mentioned examples show, modernization campaigns in the region always had their "indicator driven" objectives: kilometers of railways per square kilometers of the territory in the second part of the last century, number of households with electricity supply at the middle of the 20th century or number of computers per students in the schools nowadays. Nevertheless, this focused way of modernization sometimes appears to be very effective. One of the characteristics of the previous and recent modernization waves is the lack of sectoral balance. Due to the lack of resources state driven efforts and developments were concentrated on those strategic components of the perceived backwardness that might have a pulling effect on other sectors if developed. Recently the extensive use of contemporary information and communication technologies is regarded to be one of the possible breakout points. In spite of the relative lag of other sectors, this might play the same role in the building a knowledge and information production based economy that was played by the railways in the development of industry one and half century ago.

Without doubting the mobilizing effect of these indicators (or even the importance of computers) this traditional "indicator driven", pattern-following and state initiated way of modernization seems to be challenged by the events and trends of the postmodern world. Modernization is a diffuse category; "postmodernization" makes it more diffuse than ever been. As Keith Morrison wrote: "We are moving from a modern society towards a postmodern society, with the decline of the large-scale factory system, the increasingly rapid production of smaller, niche-targeted goods, the rise of the service sector, the growth of international capitalism, the move from "organized capitalism" to "disorganized capitalism", the expansion of the information revolution, the cult of immediacy and post-Fordist forms of organization and production. Flexibility, responsiveness, consumerism and client satisfaction are the order of the day, with flatter management organization and organic rather than mechanistic views of an organization (…), multifunctional and fluid teams, multiskilling and an emphasis on team rewards, personal fulfillment and empowerment and trust in senior managers." (Morrison, 1998.) All these trends have tremendous implications for the reform of public sectors, especially for educational reform. The vision underpinning the intended changes, the role of state and other actors, the view of schools and as a consequence of the educational system should be reconsidered.

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1.3. Transition and educational change

As it was mentioned earlier, many of the key factors that should be taken into account when designing educational policies "are totally, or to a large degree, external to the system." (Sandi, 1997) No doubt, the strong influence of "external" factors to educational strategies is an important characteristic of policies in any of the countries on the globe. Moreover, connecting social and economic objectives with education goals (that is, connecting educational outcomes with learning outcomes) is not only inevitable, but essential in setting educational goals. The problem of the transformation of education in the region is that the process is compressed into a very short period of time. Therefore, there was no space and time – and sometimes experience in place – to properly place educational goals within its environment.

In the circumstances of thorough structural reform the traditional "improvement" oriented patterns of educational policy can hardly be applied. Not only because of the depth and speed of the necessary changes in education itself, but also because the broader context of education (public administration, economy and labour market, political system, public services, stratification of the societies, etc.) is a "moving target". Due to the connection between educational reform and the parallel and rapid reform of other sectors, structural and systemic transformation and development in education very often lose touch with each other. Thus the systemic changes of the transition process are not necessarily driven by the requirements of development needs of the individual social services. Policy issues are overpoliticized, the public debate on policy issues is heavily influenced by ideological considerations. During the period of transition the systemic conditions of development are in the focus of educational policies, rather than pedagogical development itself.

As a consequence of this logic of transition, educational policies are usually fragmented. For example decentralization of the governance of education is a part of overall changes in the public administration system, transformation of the textbook publishing system is driven by the liberalization of the entire publishing business, the new system of financing of education is part of the treasury reform, etc. The result is that decentralization, financing and textbook publishing are rarely dealt with as the components of a coherent educational reform strategy that is developed within a genuine educational policy framework. The overall transformation is not less fragmented. Education

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almost never or rarely appears as a component of a broader human capital investment strategy; sectors like labour, economic development, welfare, health and education are treated as isolated spheres. It clearly weakens the positions of education, which is still financed according to the „remainder principle".

These features of the transition in education are even more striking in the light of the of the story of the two exceptions. The gradual "relaxation" of the communist system in Hungary from the late seventies and the academic resistance in Slovenia to the last Yugoslav education reform in 1982 resulted in the formation of an academic elite that developed "alternative" reform strategies in both countries. Although, due to the lacking external references these reform strategies were rather based on an anthropological substitute to clearly defined desirable educational outcomes, they developed a certain view on genuine educational matters, such as curriculum or the structure of education. It allowed Hungary and Slovenia to make the first steps of changes already in the eighties and resulted in a rich and informed policy discourse in the nineties. Meanwhile, in the rest of the region even nowadays the anthropology based vision of pedagogy and the desirable educational outcomes defined in terms of economic of social effectiveness are often mixed.

In the first stage of transition the central issues to be dealt with in the region were the democratization of the political superstructure and privatization, building the institutions of a market economy. This process imposed an effect on education in two aspects. The first is the influence on those components of the educational systems that were closely connected to the democratization process: reform of the governance system and the rapidly emerging NGO sector. The second is the appearance of private education, primarily the reestablishment of church owned schools and the establishment of new schools for the elite.

It can not be taken for granted that policy makers in the region are concerned about the same problems that external observers could find important (such as quality, as it is recently internationally understood, cost-effectiveness, equity, etc.). Not necessarily because they are not informed enough, (although it happens) or because their professional ethos is not similar to what we might expect, (although it might be true). Sometimes the reason is that their view, their values and their priorities are simply different. It is connected to the diversity of approaches to education. Undertaking the risk of using rude simplifications we might say that there are four typical approaches to educational policy in the region. (I use "approaches" instead of "ideologies" because the content of labels, like social democracy or christian democracy is not necessarily the same as in

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Western European countries.) The weight of each approach varies from country to country. These are the "egalitarian", the "elitist", the "free market" and the "democratic" approaches. (See: Box 1.)

Box 1.

Competing approaches to educational change

"The same for all." The egalitarian approach is influenced by leftist ideologies. Builds on the traditional socialist understanding of social equality and on the notion that education provides access to social opportunities regardless of its pedagogical value. Policies based on this approach focus on systemic outcomes like graduation rates at different levels of education. In terms of systemic reform they are striving to maintain centralization and control and are opposing privatization of education services. They tend to give advantage to structural and institutional policy devices.

"Quality for those who deserve it." The elitist approach is influenced by the ideologies of the ruling elite, very often conservative in a traditional Central-European and nationalistic way. The reform strategy of this approach is promotes centralization and liberalization at the same time. This approach focuses on learning outcomes but in a selective way. These policies typically promote the establishment of separate institutions of religious education.

"Quality for those who can afford it." The free market approach is free of ideology or influenced by modern "Tory" values and considerations. Its systemic view is a decentralized and liberalized educational system and supports privatization in education. Free market policies focus on learning outcomes and labour market outcomes.

"Quality for all." The democratic approach is typically connected to the liberal political and ideological agenda. In systemic terms it promotes decentralization and liberalization and represents a sector-neutral supportive attitude to private education. Democratic policies harmonize choice and equity, focus on social and labour market outcomes and give advantage to functional policy devices.

Due to the above-described diversity of approaches, "western" or international "mainstream" policy recommendations are often rejected and considered to be hostile to the "traditions" of the countries. The educational traditions of the pre-communist and the communist period are important obstacles to the adjustment of educational provisions to the new economic and democratic environment. (For example in several countries the traditional academic school leaving examination is almost untouchable.)

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The uncertainty of the role of state in education is also connected to the problem of diverse approaches. Even if an educational system is moving towards decentralization and liberalization the conditions of more indirect governance are lacking. In several countries the tools of political-administrative regulations became weak, but the ways of professional and market regulation are still not effective. Due to the lack of expertise, appropriate institutional settings, formal and institutionalized systems of bargaining and information, several governments are gradually loosing influence over the distribution of resources and the quality of education.

Listing the several shortcomings of the transition process in education on the previous pages definitely does not mean that this process is only constrained by problems and obstacles; it also offers – or at least, at the beginning of the nineties offered – rarely given opportunities, especially in two respects. The first is the "comparative advantage" of newcomers. This phenomenon is well known from the history of economy. For example, when Germany started to build its railways at the middle of the nineteenth century it used the latest technologies that were much advanced than British railways built a half century earlier. Something similar happened to certain Central-Eastern European countries in the nineties, for example in the banking services (i.e. skipping the period of cheques) or in mobile communication. The transformation of education produced several examples of that kind. For example, the immediate jump to a third generation national core curriculum in Hungary or building a good system of assessment in Lithuania are good cases to prove this advantage.

The second set of unique opportunities opened by the transition process is related to the atmosphere of revolutionary changes. It created a real and again, rarely given momentum for change. This momentum allowed to spare the long period of gradual transformation of certain services and segments of the education system by their simple replacement. This is something, what most Western-European countries could not afford during the last decades. In addition, the collapse of communist regimes – and the regained independence in a few cases – liberated a huge amount of creativity. The disappearance of decades long oppressive control opened new ways for teachers, school directors, publishers and researchers who considered these opportunities to be the end of their frustration caused by the lack of space for their professional self-fulfillment. Especially, in the case of the academic elite that had a huge impact on the educational policies throughout the nineties in most countries remarkable academic experience was matched with creativity and brave professional fantasy.

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1.4. The direction of transition in education

The direction and the structural characteristics of the transition in education can powerfully be described by using the metaphors: "*command driven*" and "*demand driven*" systems. The first describes the main characteristics of the old fashioned educational systems, which fitted well to the previous political and economic system. This heritage will be described in the following sections of this paper. What is important to note here is the fact, that – apart from serious weaknesses – these systems had several strengths. In international comparison the enrolment rates in pre-school education were relatively high, enrolment in primary and lower secondary level was almost universal and free, the teachers supply and that of school buildings was generous, and the achievement of pupils in mathematics and sciences was traditionally good.

One of the features of public policies in the CEE region that surprises western observers is the low planning capacity of policy makers in countries of former planed economies. This becomes more understandable if we distinguish macro-economic planning and social planning. Since social services, such as health, cultural or educational services were the subjects of distribution and supply and these services were considered to be "non-productive", they raised only mere logistics problems. Therefore, there was no demand for strategic thinking or the use of sophisticated methods of planning in these sectors.

The demand driven system is rather a kind of vision, even if a few countries in the region (like Poland and Hungary) are quite close to it. The vision of reform is an essential problem, because due to the lack of historical precedents of this kind of transition, the reforms of education in the region – using Ana Maria Sandi's distinction – are designed in an *adaptive* and an *anticipatory* way at the same time. (Sandi, 1997) In many cases the vision behind educational reform is the simple distillation of the characteristics of the educational systems of developed western countries. In several cases building on, or reference to "western examples" is a substitute to home made visions on education.

Probably the most striking characteristic of this "vision substitute" is its undifferentiated feature in terms of time and space. The disappearing of the iron curtain caused a kind of information overload; sometimes German vocational education policies of the 70s are mixed with

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British quality assurance policies of the 90s. As a result, these "vision substitutes" are far from being coherent. Nevertheless, policies of EU, OECD, the World Bank and other international development agencies are creating a kind of coherent educational policy framework. This "mainstream" policy is a powerful reference for experts and policy makers in the region.

The typical characteristics of "command driven" and "demand driven" systems are the following:

The "command driven" system	The "demand driven" system
Teaching is in the center of pedagogy, teachers are in the center of policies.	Learning is in the center of pedagogy, students are in the center of policies.
Focuses on resources, controls processes and does not really care about outcomes.	Focuses on learning outcomes, improves the quality of processes, adjusts resources.
Gives preference to institutional and structural policies.	Gives preference to functional policies (improvement and development).
Focuses on the amount of financial resources that is deployed for educational provisions.	Focuses on the cost effectiveness of educational provisions.
Policy is driven by political and/or ideological agendas.	Policy is driven by analysis and bargaining.
The system is centralized and controlled.	The system is decentralized and liberalized.
The flow of information is blocked and reduced, the absorptive capacity of "educationalists" is low at both middle and grassroot levels (obedient system)	The flow of information is free and fostered, the absorptive capacity of "educationalists" is high at all levels (learning systems).
The number of circles that are involved in policy development, is small, stakeholders are not organized.	The number of circles that are involved in policy development is big, stakeholders are organized, and bargaining is institutionalized.

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The creation of a new "demand driven" system in these countries is not the result of a long, organic process of trial and change. As a consequence, there are several parallel systemic and pedagogical views on "reform", a nearly consensual agreement on basic values behind the diverse pedagogical objectives of education is lacking and the implementation of reform strategies is at the mercy of the results of parliamentary elections.

The so-called reform in education is not a linear and continuous process; it follows the logic of "two steps forward, one step back". Nevertheless, we can identify three typical stages in the process of transition in education in the region. The first is what Cézar Birzea describes as the stage of "rectification measures". (Birzea, 1994) This period is characterized by the abolishment of the ideological monopoly of the state, the strict control of institutions and individuals and the forced uniformity of the system. In the Baltic countries it was supplemented with the expansion of the state languages as the language of instruction. The first rectification measures were ad hoc, limited in scope and were not backed by a comprehensive strategy. The milestones of this stage were new laws on education between 1991 and 1993 and huge state initiated programs, such as the retraining of Russian language teachers in Hungary or immediate changes of the curricula of specific subjects.

The second stage is probably the period of the quest for overall educational reform strategies. This is the period of "white papers", "reform plans" and "mid-term development programs". At this stage in most of the countries the problems of school structure are in the focus of the debates on educational reform. (The Baltic countries seemed to be exceptions, because they opted for the Scandinavian type of comprehensive school systems.) There are a few countries that have already reached the third stage, which is the time of implementation and fine-tuning. The key issues that are typically discussed at this stage are functional problems rather than structural ones.

The countries of the region are at different stages in this systemic transformation process. There are countries, which just started to prepare for the first steps, while others have almost reached the point, when the main task is fine tuning the new system. It is important to note, that even the huge structural changes in the conditions and environment of the educational policy and in the educational system itself do not result automatically in higher quality and increased external efficiency. On the contrary, the sudden and frequent changes of regulation, content or financing, the questioned legitimacy of traditional values, the fast transformation of policy expectations of governments and the points of orientation of teachers and schools in general, very often result in temporary decline of quality

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in education. (We might call this almost unavoidable characteristic of educational transition "reform implementation dip".) Improved quality and effectiveness will hopefully be the result of a long period of improvement in a more "development friendly" systemic environment. (From the point of view of quality the differences among the countries of the region are much smaller).

To sum it up, the real challenge of the transition in education is that all domains of the educational system (school structure, management, financing, teacher training, assessment, etc.) should be reconstructed according to a vision of a user-friendly system. In addition it should be done in a perpetually changing environment, with the desirable learning outcomes in our mind and in a coherent way.

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Chapter 2. Transition and educational policy making

Summary

- The comparison of the "western" and "Central-Eastern-European" meaning of educational reform shows that in the region reform efforts mainly aim at transforming the systemic environment of schools. In addition, these reforms - to a huge extent -driven by ideological, political and social considerations and much less by genuine educational considerations or those of the users of educational services.
- While in the developed countries educational reform is supported by existing educational information systems and formal channels of policy consultation, in the CEE countries the creation of the basic conditions of informed and open policy making are inherent components of the reform agenda.
- There are two typical patterns of managing systemic transformation in the region; they can be characterized as mainly "top-down" and mainly "bottom-up" patterns. These patterns describe the logic of the reform process and have consequences both for the features of the new system and for the conditions of policy making.
- The distinction between politics and policy is rarely unambiguous in the CEE countries. Due to the not yet "reinvented" art of policy analysis and policy planning strategic thinking on educational policy matters is often fragmented. In most cases strategic goals, policy tools and the actual problems in the delivery of educational services are not properly separated and connected.
- The comparison of different educational sector strategies shows that there is a trade off among the political marketing, public legitimacy and professional quality of strategy building.
- A mature policy system that the CEE countries gradually develop, have certain systemic characteristics that allow to answer the questions that are raised by the different components of the educational policy development and implementation process.

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The overview on the main characteristics of the transition process and the transition in education in the previous chapter makes drawing a few conclusions possible about the existing conditions of educational policy making in the CEE countries. This chapter will attempt to grasp the meaning of "educational reform" in the CEE countries, will summarize the main obstacles to informed policy making and tries to describe the "matured" policy system that these countries attempt to build.

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2.1. Educational reform

It is not the purpose of this paper to provide a taxonomy of different types of reform. Nevertheless, the understanding of educational reform efforts in the CEE countries is the first step in revealing the strength and weaknesses of policy making in these countries. First of all, let us turn back for a while to the "uniqueness" of educational transition in the region. Accentuating a few "messages" of the previous sections aims at forming a provisional answer to the question: what does educational reform mean in comparison to the – deliberately undifferentiated – Western-European meaning of the phrase? It is important to make it clear, that the following differences does not refer to the content or direction of change, nor the model or pattern of systemic environment of delivery of education. In all these respects the differences among the Western-European countries sometimes not less huge than among the countries of the region is concerned. This comparison is designed to demonstrate the differences in relation to the way and the scope of changes.

Educational Reform	
In Western-European countries	**In Central-Eastern European countries**
Reform is considered to be a new wave of a basically organic process of change (i.e. reconstruction).	Reform is considered to be an almost complete systemic and structural change (i.e. rebuilding).
Mainly genuine educational considerations and those of the "final users" mainly drive reform.	Reform is – to a huge extent – driven by ideological and political considerations.
The external challenges to education are partly predictable.	The speed of the transformation of the economic and social environment is very high.
Reform is initiated because of concerns about the achievement of students and the quality of education.	Educational reform is an inherent component of the overall transition agenda.
Avoidance of major structural changes.	Strong focus on structural issues.
Reform is about the support of grass-root change.	Reform is about the top-down implementation of systemic changes.
Reform is supported by an existing and extensive system of information (evaluation, assessment, research) and by formal channels of bargaining and public discourse.	Reform is partly about the creation of the basic conditions of informed and open policy making.

The underlying reason for the above described differences is the different timeframe and – as it was already mentioned - the different scope of changes. In the huge majority of the Western-European countries the period of major structural reforms is over, (there was no one serious structural change initiated in any of the Western-European countries in the nineties) and there was no need for the serious reconsideration of the entire systemic environment of schools. Although change is considered to be a perpetual adjustment process to the external challenges to education, the scope of changes almost never goes

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beyond the realm of problems that can not be tackled by the means of development within a basically unchallenged system. As opposed to this pattern, in the Central-Eastern European countries there was no single segment of the system that remained unchallenged. Even if certain reform efforts focused their attention to the "software" of education (curriculum and assessment) the scope of the necessary changes was big enough to enforce the reconsideration of all other segments, as well.

What follow from the different meaning of reform? Without claiming completeness, let us summarize a few implications of these differences:

- The legitimization demand of the changes is different, i.e. the role of political legitimacy is bigger in the CEE countries.
- The reform agenda is developed in a different way.
- Due to the speed and depth of transformation of external factors, strategies are often provisional. The mechanisms of correction should be the inherent components of any implementation strategy.
- Procedures that are created during the reform process are sometimes equally important as the policy objectives themselves.
- The use of routine solutions and tools that are proven to be effective in western countries are not necessarily working in the CEE countries.
- As it was already mentioned (and straining the patience of the reader) will be mentioned again, the creation of conditions of policy making and implementation almost from scratch is an inherent component of the reform.

Another way to capture the essence of post-communist educational reforms is comparing them with the reform pattern of the previous regimes. In a few countries of the region, such as in Poland, Hungary and Slovenia, the post-communist reforms are considered to be the continuation of the limited reforms of the previous decades. Disregarding the 1985 Hungarian law on education, in systemic terms this view of a long-term organic change is misleading. The main characteristics of socialist "educational reforms" were: exclusive top-down approach to changes, the approval of "experimental" programs in a limited number of schools, sometimes deconcentration of state control as "decentralization", enforced changes in the school structure by regulation and discrete decisions as "structural adjustment", changes in the state issued curricula that were regarded to be "quality standards" and the decisive role of small, politically acceptable influential professional elite. Policies were formulated in dark remote offices of the Education Departments of the central apparatus of the communist parties or – in a better case – in the ministries without being in touch with the real world of schools. Then policies were "implemented" by a governmental decree or ministerial resolution with the strong conviction that the system is already working in accordance to the new regulation.

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Although these – at once sad and comical - characteristics still shape the style and operation of educational policy making in the majority of the countries that are concerned, it is important to note, that due to the transformation of the constitutional and political superstructure, the liberation of the media, the fast growing NGO sector, the increasing role of market forces and other significant changes, it is not possible to run educational reforms in the same way as in the communist era anymore.

To sum it all up, we might say that the real meaning of reform during the transition period above all is *managing systemic transformation.* Depending on the main characteristics of the educational system and other (e.g. political or ideological) factors, this systemic transformation may follow a mainly *top-down* and a mainly *bottom-up* logic. (These patterns are rather typical than clear directions.) The patterns of the two transformation logic are the following:

Systemic transformation	
Top-down	**Bottom-up**
Deconcentration of management, professional legitimacy is the main concern.	Decentralization of management, democratic legitimacy is the main concern.
Gradual transformation of the system of administrative control to a system of quality control.	Abolishment of the system of administrative state control, accreditation on diverse technics of quality management.
Moving to a comprehensive school system in order to strengthen equity.	Emphasizing choice and giving space for diverse programs.
Steering the flow of students and changing the school structure mainly by regulation and less by incentives	Steering the flow of students and changing the school structure mainly by financial incentives and content and less by regulation.
Opening the policy field for negotiation at the national level.	Opening the policy field for negotiation at all levels.
Establishment of institutional frameworks for different educational services.	Liberalization and marketization of educational services.

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Both directions have their strength and their weaknesses. Systemic reform in a top-down fashion might be faster and the process of systemic and structural adjustment is smoother. Nevertheless, due to the traditional-conservative professional attitude of educationalist and the extremely slowly changing organizational culture of educational institutions, even if the autonomy of schools and different levels and components of the system is strengthened, the main direction of change remains top-down. Also, attempts to overcome the communist heritage – in all sense - is less radical. A typical trap of this direction is initiating bottom level changes without attempting to rebuild a supportive systemic environment of schools; this is definitely an obstacle to sustainable changes. The mainly bottom-up design of systemic and structural adjustment is slower and the speed of changes largely depends on the speed of changes in the economic and social environment. Nevertheless, changes are more organic and reform basically aims at creating a favorable environment for change that is the result of the interests and initiatives of the school users and the schools, themselves. A possible trap of this direction is that governments easily loose control of processes and the quality of educational provisions. Beyond these differences, the most important commonality between the two directions is the strengthening of professional and institutional autonomy of schools.

All of the above mentioned weaknesses of different types of systemic reforms can be reduced by a significant extent, if the art of public policy and especially educational policy will be reinvented in the countries of the region.

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2.2. The "missing link" of the policy process

In most of the languages that are spoken in the region there is no separate word for policy. This is a powerful indication of the lacking distinction between action aiming at capturing or influencing power and action aiming at changing or influencing the behavior of individuals or institutions. Even if politics used in an adjectival construction (politici educationale, vzdelavacia politika, oktatáspolitika, etc.) this distinction is not obvious. What is more and more distinguished from politics (although the borders are still blurred) is public management, which in most of the cases is still used in a narrow administrative sense. This "semantic" detour is designed to demonstrate that after a half a century, in which there were hardly any spheres of social and private life that were not the matters of "political decisions", the reinvention of educational policy is not a single problem of technical expertise or the lack of sophisticated computer software. Professionalization of educational policy, before all, means partial depolitization of policy, that is, the emancipation of genuine educational considerations. Paradoxically, the relative detachment of policy from politics should be matched with the creation of political economy and political marketing of educational policy.

These remarks already raise the problem of the distinction between the narrow and broader understanding of educational policy. In a narrow sense it is about the "infrastructure" of policy making and implementation. In a broader sense it is about the systemic environment, in which policy making and the delivery of educational services are connected. Without underestimating the huge detrimental impact of the lack of technical expertise in this field in the CEE countries, the "American" policy steps approach ("collect data, analyze them, develop options, choose and go" type of advice) seems to be simplifying the problem. The necessary emancipation of educational policy has its systemic requirements that should be explored and developed. Therefore, further on this paper will focus on the issues that are emerging from the broader meaning of policy making.

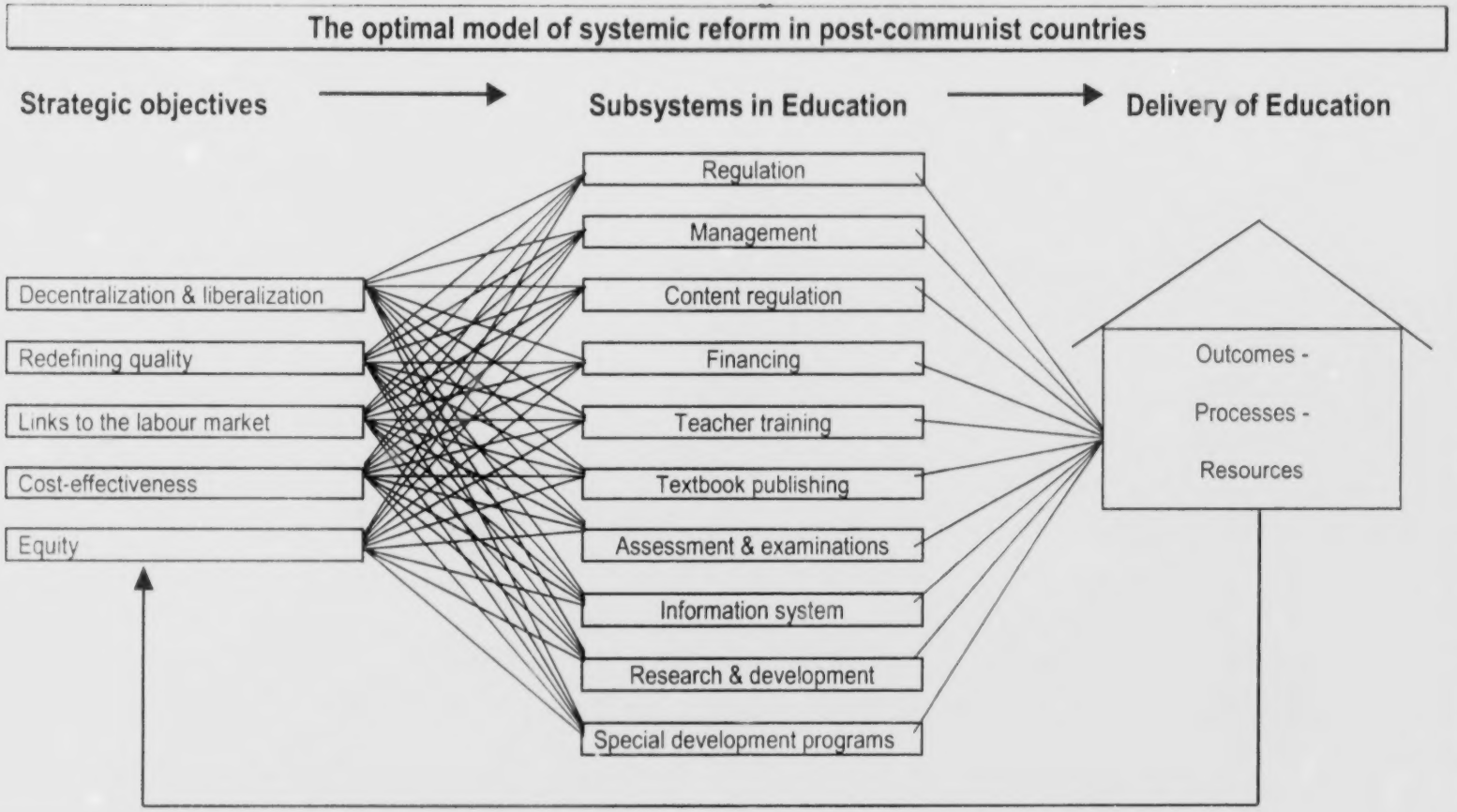
Chart 1. illustrates the framework in which – in an ideal case – strategic objectives are connected to the reform of different components of the system and in a direct or indirect way, with the delivery of education services. (Strategic objectives and the different systemic components can be and - in the different countries - are structured in different

ways.) In the CEE countries the institutional system of delivering education (schools, teachers, blackboard and chalk) is in place. The different components of the educational system and the tools of their restructuring, - disregarding some shortages - are in place, too. The capacity and expertise for doing it is partly given and partly accessible. The strategic educational problems in most of the countries are "in the air" and due to the changes of political superstructure the democratic political decision making procedures are more or less functioning. (Given all these assets, the problems that educational policy is facing in the CEE countries are almost completely different from those in the really poor countries of the third world.)

In the following sections (see chapter 3.) five sets of key policy issues will be stressed: decentralization, quality, external efficiency, cost-effectiveness and equity. As it will be seen, non-of them can be dealt with only at the level of the schools. (This statement might be valid in general, but in the CEE countries during the period of transition it has special importance.) *Each* of these problem areas sets up a claim to initiate major or minor changes in *each* of the components of the systemic environment of the schools.

There are no magic bullets. Even if most of the decision-makers are aware of this triviality, the political marketing of policy making generates a huge demand for simple, easily marketable messages, and one can hardly call it a problem. Problems arise – and this is the typical case in the countries of the region – when (1) policy objectives and tools are inverted, and (2) when formulating simple policy messages the problems themselves seem to be simple.

Chart 1.



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1. It happens too often, that instead of composing clear and understandable policy objectives, simple systemic changes are formulated. For example, instead of saying: education should emphasize the development of communication skills, (*therefore*, regulation, governance, curricula, financing, teacher training, assessment, etc. should be reshaped in a certain way) ministers declare that new national core curriculum should be developed (*because* the development of communication skills should be emphasized).
2. Most of the policy makers in the region spare the tiring trip "there and back". The more we investigate educational problems they become more and more complicated and complex. Nevertheless, at a certain stage of understanding one might do the trip back and when arrived, clear policy duties can be formulated. Probably this is the real mission of policy analysis: to bridge the gap between the esoteric world of educational research and the realm of political buzzwords.

All these characteristics of the region suggest that the "missing link" of the educational policy making process in these countries is policy analysis, planning and consultation; that is, the lack of system and capacity in place, that:

- connects the expected and desirable educational outcomes with strategic issues "in the air",
- gathers the different policy issues into a coherent and synergetic reform strategy,
- reveals the implications of these strategies for each of the components the of educational system, and
- design the effective implementation of these strategies.

In other words, educational reform strategies, if elaborated, sometimes are not based on a pedagogical vision, are not coherent, the systemic implications of strategic objectives are not thought through, therefore, the internal coherence of the system is lacking. (A good example for the possible unintended effects of the lacking synergy in reform strategies and in systemic implementation is the "backwash effect" of the Slovenian Maturata reform, where examination requirements overwrote the curriculum requirements.) And again, we should keep in mind that these countries cannot afford to "prioritize" the most important policy areas and go problem by problem. Due to the nature of the transition, they should find responses to the challenges of each of them at the same time and they should do it in a coherent and synergetic way, both in terms of the reform strategy and the systemic transformation. And if the problem can be further worsened, all of these reforms – because of the fragile political system in the majority of the CEE countries – should be done under the pressure of political immediacy.

All these remarks definitely does not mean that there were no high quality strategy papers developed in the region, such as the strategies in Hungary ("The strategy for the development of the Hungarian public education", 1998.) in Poland ("The Polish system of national education in the period of reform", 2000.) and in the Czech Republic (Czech national program of education development", 2000.). The common feature of these "second generation" strategies that they are the result of a decade long learning process. Each papers are based on the partial reconsideration and improvement of previous documents of the same kind. (See boxes 2. and 3.) Also, the strategies that were developed in the end of the nineties typically were based on a much better understanding of all kinds of processes within the respective education system.

Box 2.

Outline of "The strategy for the development of the Hungarian public education" (1998)

1. General survey on the contemporary state of education

1.1 The social and economic environment of education
1.2 The internal state of education
1.2.1. Governance
1.2.2. Content regulation and curricula
1.2.3. School structure and the flow of students in the systems
1.2.4. Disadvantaged groups and groups that fall behind
1.2.5. The teaching staff
1.2.6. The costs and financing of education

2. The objectives and direction of development

2.1. The increasing length of general basic education and the expansion of secondary education
2.2. Content development
2.3. Quality assurance in education
2.4. Measures to combat school failure and falling behind
2.5. The renewal of the teaching profession
2.6. The increasing of educational expenditure and cost-efficiency

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3. The organisational and management conditions and tools of development

3.1. The development of the governance of education
3.2. The tools of development
3.2.1. The publicity of the strategy
3.2.2. Strategic co-ordination
3.2.3. Regulation
3.2.4. Financing
3.2.5. Content regulation
3.2.6. School improvement
3.2.7. In-service and pre-service teacher training
3.2.8. Pedagogical services
3.2.9. Research and development
3.2.10. The development of planning competencies
3.2.11. The statistical-information system
3.2.12. International co-operation
3.2.13. Dialogue and communication serving modernisation

The comparison of the different strategy building processes show that there is a possible tradeoff among the political marketing, the public legitimacy and the professional quality of the strategies. In different countries in different periods the professional quality of the strategies was emphasized, while in other countries rather building public consensus and assuring ownership of stakeholders was the main concern. (To a certain extent it is related to the specific systemic conditions of policy making in the different countries, that will be looked at in the following sections.) Another visible difference among the different strategies is the extent, to which the detailed plans of implementation found to be important and integral part of the strategies.

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Box 3.

Outline of the "Czech national program of education development" (2000)

1. Solutions and pre-requisites for developing the educational system

1.2. The general goals of education and teaching
1.3. The transformation of society and educational policy principles
1.4. Managing and financing the educational system in an environment of decentralization and participation
1.5. Quantitative development study of the educational system
1.6. European and international cooperation in education

2. Pre-school, basic and secondary education

2.1. General educational issues concerning the regional educational system
2.1.1. Curriculum policy
2.1.2. Evaluation in field of education
2.1.3. School – its autonomy and inner transformation
2.1.4. Teachers
2.2. Specific issues concerning grades and areas of education
2.2.1. Pre-school education
2.2.2. Basic education
2.2.3. Secondary general and professional education
2.2.4. Amateur education and leisure time
2.2.5. The education of extraordinarily talented individuals
2.2.6. Special education

3. Tertiary education

3.1. General issues in the tertiary education sector
3.2. Specific problems of individual parts of tertiary education
3.2.1. Higher education institutions
3.2.2. Higher professional schools

4. Adult education

4.1. General questions about adult education
4.2. The specific problems of adult education

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2.3. The mature educational policy system

The conditions of policy making and implementation – being instrumental in their nature – almost never or rarely appear on the reform agenda of the CEE countries. All kinds of improvement of these conditions, (that are really remarkable in a few countries) are the results of immediate needs of handling different specific policy issues. For example, if the actual main strand of reform is curricular change, the law on education is amended, institutional frameworks are adjusted, capacity building programs are launched, information is gathered and disseminated in order to serve the implementation of new content regulation. Nevertheless, immediately, when policy priorities are changed, that is, a new party captures the ministry, the law is amended and institutions are reorganized again, new kind of training programs are launched, new kinds of information is gathered and disseminated, and so forth. The result is an almost complete lack of long-term systemic investment to educational policy making and implementation. This results in keeping the above mentioned circle moving from elections to elections.

Reiterating one of the conclusions of the previous section, we might say that – regardless of the type of the system that the different countries build - the conditions of policy making and implementation on the on hand and the characteristics of a given educational system on the other can hardly be separated. Without sticking too much to the assumption that educational decision-making is a completely rationalistic process, (the irrational way of decision making is a collective experience of the citizens of the region) we should say that the degree of rationalism matters. All kinds of developments in the systemic environment of policy making may increase the rationality, i.e. the openness and quality of decision making. Using the broader understanding of educational policy making the real task is to reveal the systemic conditions of open and informed policy development, as well as their effective implementation. In the next chapter we will take a closer look to the most important conditions and the requirements of creating a favourable environment of policy making. However, it is important to shortly describe the key characteristics of a mature educational policy system against which the state of affairs in the CEE countries can be assessed.

Again, "mature" policy making does not mean at all, that policy making should be a sequence of rational steps. As Hill states, "decision making rarely proceeds in such a logical, comprehensive and purposive manner. Among the reasons for this are that is almost impossible to consider all alternatives during the process of decision." (Hill, 1997.) Even the distinction between policy planning and implementation might be problematic. Nevertheless, the policy process – even if follows a rather incremental logic – contains certain components, that require to answer certain questions. The main questions – in the most simplistic way - are the following:

1. *Agenda setting* (Identification and structuring the problems and/or needs): What is the problem? How do we know that it is problem? What do we know about the reasons for the problem?
2. *Policy Formulation* (Identification of goals and the necessary tools): What are the optional solutions? What do we need to do in order to assess their feasibility, costs and impact? What kind of tools are at our disposal (i.e. regulation, capacity building, incentives, institutions and persuasion) and which tools are lacking?
3. *Policy consultation and adoption* (bargaining with stakeholders and formal approval): Who should be consulted by who? At which level and in what form should be the decision made?
4. *Policy implementation* (modifications in the systemic environment of education, launching special targeted programs): What are the appropriate channels through which the use of chosen policy tools impose the maximum impact? How to assure synergy within the "implementation package"?
5. *Policy assessment* (measurement and evaluation of the effectiveness of the policy): What to measure and/or evaluate?

The conditions that allow answering these questions, that is, the characteristics of a mature policy development and implementation system are the following:

The type, culture and operational characteristics of educational governance and management	• Level of decentralisation • Transparency and effectiveness • Financial and administrative accountability • Reliable and OECD compatible education statistics and information system, regular system monitorin
Educational accountability	• Assessment of students' achievement • Policy and project evaluation • Policy formulation that is driven by learning outcomes • Appropriate regulation and financing
Quality assurance	• The systemic conditions of quality assurance in the delivery of education services • The mechanisms in place assuring quality in the chain of services provided to school
Stakeholder involvement	• Self-organised stakeholders • Institutionalised formal policy consultation and bargain • Open public discourse
Capacity building	• Mechanisms in place to adjust capacities to the actual requirements of changes in each segment of the system • Higher education that is flexible and responds to the emerging new needs
Internationalisation	• Integration to international frameworks of policy research and analysis • Policy formulation that builds on international comparison and experience

In most of the CEE countries the increasing involvement of the users of educational provisions and the external actors – together with the increasing decentralization and school autonomy - brings up the problem of two different strategies of the creation of system-wide evaluation, assessment, quality assurance, research, development and training, etc. services. There is a direct, development kind of policy, by which governments establish the institutional frameworks for such services and by funding the projects of these institutions influence their objectives and content. In this way all these services are considered to be inherent components of the tool-kits of government policy implementation. Policies, based on another, rather indirect approach, consider these services as components of the systemic environment of the delivery of education. Therefore, they strive to generate demand (for example, by supporting the users of these services instead of supporting the providers) and build professional support and quality assurance mechanisms for those, who respond to this demand. Apart from the countries with the most decentralized systems, the first direct approach seems to be prevailing in the region. These approaches shouldn't be mutually exclusive. Governments while creating the conditions of implementation of their policies shouldn't necessarily keep controlling the tools they use.

Chapter 3. Investment to effective policy making: the five points of leverage

Summary

- High quality policy making requires certain systemic conditions. In the CEE countries there are five areas of outstanding importance in which deliberate investment is essential: (1) the governance and management of education, (2) measures assuring educational accountability, (3) quality assurance in the systemic environment of schools, (4) mechanisms of policy consultation and discourse and (5) the capacity of all kinds of professionals in the education sector.
- One of the obstacles to the development of the governance of education is the traditional division of labour among the actors of central decision making. Since the position of ministries of education are typically weak, policy analysis, decision making and implementation are not connected properly.
- In relation to the policy development capacity of the management system the key areas to be improved are the educational information system, the monitoring of the effectiveness of policies and policy analysis and research. In relation to the policy implementation capacity of these system the most striking obstacles are the relatively weak accountability and transparency of the functioning of the management of education.
- The system of measurement of the achievement of the students that informs policy making is gradually developed in most countries. However, due to the lack of mature assessment and evaluation services in place, educational accountability systems are practically nonexistent in the region.
- Quality assurance within the chain of educational services that are consumed by the schools (such as textbook publishing, in-service training, pedagogical services, etc.) should be strengthened or created.

- One of the essential conditions of the "emancipation" of policy making is the development of institutionalized policy consultation at the national level (tripartite negotiations, policy councils and pedagogical advisory bodies) and lower levels. Also, the schools need to open up to the parents and the local communities.
- The conditions of improvement of the capacities of the different actors of education - both on the supply and demand side – should be improved.

Open, democratic and informed, that is, high quality policy making is impossible in a system that is not open, not democratic and not information-rich. In this broad systemic sense, emancipation of educational policy in the CEE countries requires deliberate long-term investment in five areas of outstanding importance: (1) the improvement of quality of the operation of educational governance and management; (2) the creation of the conditions of fostering educational accountability; (3) the building of mechanisms of quality assurance throughout the system; (4) the involvement of stakeholders and opening up the policy space for public discourse; and (5) building the capacity of actors of the educational sector.

3.1. Improvement of educational management

At the middle of the 90s a group of public administration experts done a comparative study in a few CEE countries. The research aimed at investigate the possibilities of the introduction of New Public Management (NPM) type of reforms in the region. The experts had to draw the conclusion that these western type of innovations in organizational structures, financial management, human resources management and public service delivery are irrelevant in these countries until serious structural problems are not solved. The similar problems of public administration in the region that were identified by the study are the following: (Verheijen, 1996)

- Fragmentation and lack of coordination;
- Lack of continuity;
- Lack of policy-making capacities;
- Weakness of accountability systems.

The already mentioned traditional horizontal fragmentation of management in the CEE countries in the course of the post-communist transition was supplemented with vertical fragmentation. It has worsened by the instability that is caused by the special political "spoil system" at the higher and middle levels of administration. Educational management also suffers this fragmentation and instability as other public sectors do. In addition, in the countries that move towards a decentralized public administration system, this spoil system applies at the bottom level, as well. (A returning problem of international development agencies in these countries is that building the capacity of employees of public administration, especially of the high rank civil servants, is not a long-term investment.)

In terms of strategic steering of the educational system the position of ministries is typically weak. Due to the lack of devolution of administrative task to lower levels, ministries of education are overloaded with the everyday work of running the system, so they are not able to concentrate on policy issues. Also, the level of strategic decision making is very often the Parliament, therefore, human and other resources that required for informed policy making are not deployed to the ministries. Liberating and strengthening the ministries of education is probably the first step in the creation a system, in which analysis, decision making and implementation are better connected.

From the perspective of educational policy, the problems and the needs for improvement might be structured in a different way: matters related to policy development and matters related to policy implementation. In relation to *policy development* three sets of tools require special attention: the development of information systems, the development of the system of monitoring and policy and system analysis.

Educational information system. The statistical systems of the majority of the countries both in terms of reliability and the scope of the data is gathered should be improved. Except for the OECD member countries (Poland, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Hungary) the CEE countries currently are not able produce data in the way that allows for the use of OECD/INES indicators. (Most of the ministries in the region use rough statistical figures.) Bearing the huge impact of international comparison on educational policy in mind, this can be considered to be one of the major obstacles to informed policy making. Since the use of indicators might be dangerous, (whatever is measured inclines to become a problem, what isn't remains invisible) instead of putting to use the educational indicators gradually a statistical reform connected to the territorial expansion of the INES project seems to be a big step forward. Since one of the most important external references of educational policy is the labor market the development of the system of monitoring of the actual labor market development and the extent, to which the educational and training system responds to them, the identifying of the current and forecasting of the future skills and training requirements seems to be crucial. Also, additional data provided by the regular household surveys and micro censuses should be used in order to get to a better understanding of the social environment of education.

Monitoring the effectiveness of policy. The effectiveness of policies, – therefore, the development of new policies or the correction of the old ones, – can hardly be judged without systematic measurement and evaluation of their results. Due to the lack of monitoring of the effectiveness of policies their impact is very often taken granted. In decentralized systems, in which central government responsibility for educational policy is shared with regional or local authorities, the lower level policy makers also appear to be consumers of such information.

There are three major tools of evaluation of policies: the assessment of the students' performance, the evaluation of resource spending and the evaluation of special programs. Initiating a regular monitoring and policy evaluation system is not a simple technical problem. It has several systemic conditions, such as the creation of institutional frameworks, the amendment of regulation, (for example, prescribing mandatory evaluation of programs that were funded from pub-

lic resources) or modifying the financing system (for example, setting aside the costs of mandatory evaluation within the budget of all state funded programs). Also, development of internal monitoring systems and independent evaluation capacities should be supported.

Policy analysis and research. Policy makers, especially ministries can not base their work on the analytical expertise "out there". Due to the traditions of these countries and the "state of affairs", educational research and policy analysis are not distinguished and separated. However, until policy analysis will not be institutionalized and detached from academic research the extremely sensitive relationship between "science" and "politics" will remain an important obstacle to informed policy making. One "transitional" solution to the problem is the more and more wide use of "think tanks". This is already not unprecedented in the CEE countries; as it was seen earlier, midterm reform strategies were developed by an educational policy think-tank in 1995 and 1998 in Hungary, and recently in the Czech Republic. In other countries the work of such think tanks is charged with other functions, too. For example, the Estonian Education Forum appears to be playing the role of a pressure group and a forum for policy negotiation, as well. As a consequence, the influence of politically committed professional elites is big and the professionalization of policy analysis is slow. In several countries the main pattern of supporting research is still maintaining and financing the research institutions. The increasingly used project grant financing gradually allows for policy makers to have access to the information they need.

Although it is not connected strictly with policy development, the other side of the coin should also be mentioned here: the not less problematic relationship between research and development. In the western countries educational development generates a big demand for applied research, whereas its value in the CEE countries is still very low. However, partly because of the symbolic salaries of academic researchers, an increasing number of academics are engaged in development.

The weakness of *policy implementation* capacity of educational management systems in the majority of the countries of the region is not less striking. One of the main obstacles to it is the weak accountability of public administration. The lack of transparency in the use of public funds, the relatively low ability of governments to sanction the violation of law, the resistance of citizens and institutions of any kind of state control or supervision, the dysfunctional operation of information systems are – of course, to very different extent in different countries – the signs and reasons of accountability related problems. In the developed OECD countries administra-

tion is moving from a "rational" model based on political foresight, medium and long term planning and policy making, to a "restricted" model based on expediency and the satisfaction of the clients. (Kallen, 1996) As a result of a time lag, CEE countries strive to replace their old-fashioned power-wielding pattern of administration with a rational one.

As a natural consequence of the heritage of the power-wielding administrational tradition and ethos, a clear distinction among control, external evaluation and quality assurance seems to be important to make in the CEE countries. According to this separation, control is looking after the compliance to regulation, evaluation is looking after the compliance to external professional standards and quality assurance is the support of the institutions own efforts to improve the quality of their work. This distinction was not necessary in the western countries, where the shift from state control to quality management was the result of a long, gradual process. (Even the meaning of control was almost completely different in the western countries.) For example, the recently initiated Hungarian quality assurance policy is based on the separation of the three functions.

3.2. Educational accountability: assessment and evaluation

From the middle of the 80s the increasing emphasis on the quality of education (mainly in the Anglo-Saxon countries) led to the development of educational accountability measures. These growing systems are based on the measurement of students' performance in order to assess the work of the schools. Since that, the pedagogical added value is more and more in the heart of approaches to accountability of schools. In fact, the turn of attention to the outcomes of education enriched the former finances and management based view on accountability with a new dimension. These efforts were matched with the development of professional standards of teachers' work. Educational accountability is not only about the improvement of students achievement, but also about the "mechanisms of goal-setting, the allocation of authority, the management of incentives, the building of capacities, measurement of progress, reporting of results and enforcing consequences – all related to student performance." (Adams-Kirst, 1999.)

The educational systems of the CEE countries are far from this "anglo-saxon" system, that most European countries don't even want to develop. Nevertheless, in most of the CEE countries even the "revolutionary" notion, that states are responsible for the way, how money that was collected from the citizens is spent, and moreover, for the results of the services financed by this money, is not widely shared. Due to this "command driven" character of these systems, in the majority of the countries the performance of the students is not measured. Despite of the ongoing decentralization and marketization, schools still haven't brought their services closer to the consumers and the voice of the final users of education is still not loud enough. Also, the mismatch between ambitious development goals and the scarcity of financial resources haven't raised the question: what is the money spent for?

This in-between stage, if it continues for a long time, will impose a detrimental effect on teaching. In the previous system moral played an important role in the assurance of a certain (sometimes very high) level of quality. There are signs, which render that – due to the low prestige of teaching and the low salaries in the sector - this moral decline in a few countries. Teachers are still considered to be "missionaries" who sacrify their well being for the sake of our children. The-

refore, questioning the quality and effectiveness of their work is regarded to be impolite, which is an obstacle to strengthening the professionalisation of teaching.

The two major steps in building a - in educational terms - more accountable system are the gradual development of *assessment of students' performance* and the *external evaluation of schools*.

Since information shapes the direction of change, no doubt, the "Trojan horse" of building a "demand driven" system is assessment of the achievement of students. Nevertheless, quality of education is already a too complex concept to be measured simply by assessment. Even the range of different knowledge areas and skills that might be measured is widening. Therefore, although assessment is still one of the most powerful policy tools, it must be one component of a broader educational accountability strategy. In addition, a multilevel assessment system (from participation in international comparative research to the measurement of pedagogical added value in the case of each child in a classroom) is extremely expensive, most of the countries in the region can not afford it. The more soft way of enhancing educational accountability is the development of the system of external evaluation. There are several obstacles to this: the lack of institutional frameworks, the lack of expertise and methodology, the lacking "culture" of open handling of the results, etc. In a broader sense, the real obstacle in several countries is the lacking setting of standards and values, against which the work of schools can be evaluated.

As far as evaluation of schools is concerned, - as Maurice Kogan wrote - two sets of educational values ought to interplay: "those established for the nation by central authorities, and those developed pragmatically to meet particular local and client needs in the institutions." (Kogan, 1996) Even if student performance oriented accountability systems are non-existent in the CEE countries, the direction of different transformation routes allows to "forecast" the different packages of accountability tools that may be used and the different approaches to evaluation. Warming up again the metaphors of top-down and bottom-up systemic change, we can attach different approaches to the different systemic patterns with relatively low risk. The more rationalistic approach of the top-down reform design assume "that national objectives for education can be set which can be converted into prescriptive guidelines, and which will determine curricula, allocation of resources and the distribution of authority to institutions." (Kogan, 1996) On the contrary, the "modified central rationality" that is typically represented by the bottom-up reform design "allow for the setting up of a national plan for education, the interpretation of which is subject, however, to varying degrees of local choice." (Kogan, 1996.)

3.3. Quality assurance

The overall condition of effective policy making and implementation is the creation of an educational system, in which

- institutions (schools and other institutions) are capable and ready to absorb changes;
- changes do not necessarily cause the decline of quality, on the contrary, they serve its improvement; and
- the perpetual adjustment to the needs of consumers and final users perpetually challenges educational policy through challenging the systemic environment of schools.

Therefore, the problem of the systemic conditions of perpetual school level quality improvement refer to two sets of related matters: (1) the quality assurance within each of the particular components of the educational system, that is, within the "chain of educational services" and (2) the support mechanism of quality improvement efforts of the schools.

A national quality assurance policy can not be designed like a direct institution based quality management system, such as the ISO or TQM. The entire educational system should be reshaped in a way, which provides local quality assurance projects with the adequate environment and tools. The different subsystems of education either affecting directly the quality of education by providing the schools with different services, which then are transformed to pedagogical practice, (such as curricula, teacher training, teaching materials, etc.) or create the systemic environment that marks out the margins of the space of schools, within which they develop their quality improvement strategies (such as regulation, financing or examinations). In the first case the presence of internal quality assurance systems is essential. Each of these systems is the chain of different services whose quality rests on the quality of the previous one. For example, in textbook publishing the harmonization of educational, publishing and business considerations is not an easy task, it requires a multi-layered and incorporated system of quality management. Likewise, internal quality management measures should be incorporated into the system of initial teacher training (e.g. the improvement of higher education accreditation) and to in-service teacher training (e.g. accreditation and evaluation of training programs). These measures should be attached to the financing of these services.

All of the countries of the region can be characterized by the lack of equilibrium between the increasing professional autonomy of schools and their systemic environment. On the one hand, any change in education occurs if schools are equipped with the necessary tools. The different degree of the lack of absorption capacity of the schools in the different countries is an important obstacle of reforms. On the other hand, the tension between the still centralized systems (centralized decision making, rigid regulation, central content regulation, lack of financial autonomy of schools, etc.) and the expectation towards the schools to improve the quality of their work on their own, is a contradiction that most of the school principals have to face in these countries in their every-day practice.

Janos Setényi emphasizes three important policy conditions (Setényi, 1999.):

- A shift of the attitude of educational policy: instead of being "education friendly", policies should focus on the needs and demand of school users.
- Different accountability measures.
- A shift from traditionalist content policy that is based and focuses on the collective cultural values to a more consumer oriented content design.

3.4. Stakeholder involvement and public discourse

One of the most effective ways of "emancipation" of educational considerations and educational policy is the opening of the policy making field to external interests and views at all levels of the system. It means the involvement of organized interest groups or individuals who have a stake in education, the building of an internal "agora" of professional discourse within the sector and open public discourse in general.

The involvement of different groups of stakeholders and the content of problems that ought to be negotiated are typically different at different levels of the system. At the national level three types of formal and institutionalized negotiation seems to be important to differentiate:

- The tripartite (government – employers – employees) organs of bargain that are designed to deal with social and major policy issues. In the countries, in which teachers are employed by the government the weight of employer organizations is smaller than, for example, in Hungary, where the teaching staff is employed by the autonomous self-governments, so the weight of the alliances of self-governments in educational policy is very big. Trade unions of teachers play an important role in almost all of the countries of the region, although their scope is typically limited, rarely goes beyond the salary related matters. An additional problem is the weakened legitimacy of old trade unions, while the new "alternative" unions are in competition with the old ones.
- Representative multi-sided educational policy councils that might have a mandatory consultative role, (sometimes very strong ones) and are involved in the negotiation of all aspects of educational policy. Several organized interest groups might be represented in these councils: private schools, churches, minorities, NGOs, parent associations, youth organizations, professional associations, self-governments, trade unions, universities, employer organizations and, of course, governments (i.e. all interested ministries).
- Pedagogical advisory or consultative bodies that are designed to advice policy makers on pedagogy and content related issues. Although the members of the bodies of this kind are experts and researchers and not the representatives of any organizations, their composition is very often designed according to a kind of "corporative" logic.

In the great majority of the CEE countries this diversified system of national level policy negotiation does not exist. There are such organs in every country, but their role is uncertain, and very often mix up the above mentioned three types of functions and too often operate under political pressure or influence. The real problem behind the lack of powerful and effective policy consultation systems is the low-level of self-organization of different interest groups.

Since at the regional level the problems to be dealt with are different, the system of bargaining is typically different, too. Apart from the involvement of the same circles of stakeholders to decision making, a special component of negotiation at the regional level is the need for harmonizing regional development and planning, labor and welfare policies and educational development. This is the reason, why institutionalized negotiation at this level is often attached to the administrative or semi-administrative organs that are in charge of the use of resources deployed for regional development. The importance of the regional level also depends on the level of decentralization of educational governance and in general on the weight and political importance of regional autonomy.

The local level involvement of stakeholders has an additional dimension: the involvement of school users, the parents and/or the community. In terms of parental and community involvement the schools are in the focus, although in very decentralized, democratic-political management systems their involvement in local policy making is equally important. One of the major obstacles to community involvement in the CEE countries is the historically grounded lack of Protestant prototype of communities that are the basic frames of all kinds of communal life. Even if in the Baltic countries, where these rural communities have their historical roots and traditions, the disintegrative effect of the long rule of the communist system makes the revitalization of such communities very hard. As a consequence, community school programs in the region, instead of creating a situation in which the community takes over and maintains the schools, strive to use the institutional facilities of the school and they try to build on the commitment of the parents in order to build real communities. Nevertheless, in most of the countries parental involvement seems to be a more realistic approach to the opening of schools, than community involvement.

After the long historical period of communism the sudden increasing of the number of societal groups that have a stake in education related decisions is a shocking experience of almost all educators in the region. In the long run the increasing number of organized stakeholders and their more and more intensive and institutionalized involvement to policy making has a very important effect on other systemic

elements of educational policy: it generates demand. The more players on the game-field with the more diverse interests and agendas evoke the bigger demand for information, assessment and evaluation, research and analysis and new kinds of educational policy related capacities. In addition, mutual communication among the actors of policy negotiation can contribute to the enrichment of views in education. The most obvious example is the huge amount of experience and innovation that education might learn from business: new management styles, quality assurance methods, etc.

Another way of opening educational systems is through their internal professional "democratization". During the communist period teachers and principals were rather the objects than subjects of policy making. In the communist countries there was a tradition of "social debates" of major reforms that were simple political demonstrations of the "democratic" feature of decision making. At the same time, the spots of information monopolies, the lack of communication among researchers, practitioners and policy makers and the lack of channels of information exchange did not make possible the working of this internal professional publicity.

The huge amount of information that flooded these countries via the large scale training programs, the access to foreign literature, the participation of experts in international networks and the international cooperation among educational institutions caused a kind of information boom in the last decade. This resulted in the increasing number of "agents of change" in each country, who represent a contemporary approach to educational policy. Nevertheless, due to the lack of university courses on educational policy, the pure output of publishing on educational policy in native languages and the lack of language skills of educators the professional discourse on educational matters is still messy and confused in most of the countries. At a lower level, one of the main obstacles to scaled up innovation is the lack of "What works?" type of information exchange.

A very important channel, by which knowledge influences policy, is the often hysteric interest of politicians in public opinion. From the point of view of public interpretation of educational matters the role of journalists is very important. In the CEE countries the media tackles educational issues rather as political, than policy problems. The role of media is important in influencing the educational practice by the magic power of buzzwords, too. Since educational institutions in the region are still more "responsive" than innovative, the policy messages delivered by the media play an important role in the process of change. (For example, since the Hungarian ministry launched its quality assurance policy, the director of one of the primary schools in Budapest starts all the meetings of the teaching staff with the

question: "Is there anybody here, who can tell me, what the heck is quality assurance?") Even the new vocabulary that is spread by the media (with phrases, like equity, learning centered pedagogy, external effectiveness, etc.) realigns the discourse, defines the "mainstream" and creates demand for expertise.

3.5. Capacity building

The ongoing systemic transformation in the CEE countries caused a huge mismatch between the performance requirements of every single person working in the educational sector, no matter, at what level or in what type of job or institution and the skills, attitudes, dispositions, in general: the professional culture of these persons. This generates a huge demand for heavy investment to the building of capacity of educational staff. Taking into account the nature of transition in education, two target groups seem to be equally important to be addressed: teachers and all kinds of professionals working in the different components of the education system.

The traditional single "retraining" approach to the problem is proven to be ineffective. It is already considered to be a trivial experience that anyone, who goes through even the best training course, when placed back to the same environment will work basically in the same way. This definitely does not decrease the importance of training courses, only warns us to follow a more complex approach to complex problems.

In the periods of rapid and thorough changes the role and importance of in-service teacher training is much bigger than in periods, when the mission of such training is rather "maintenance" and upgrading of the knowledge and skills of teachers. In spite of this, most of the in-service training systems in the region remained old fashioned training institutes based on a "command driven" mission. For example, in Latvia the 39 regional school boards have the capacity to organize in-service teacher training. The state pays for the costs of the courses and teachers pay for the travel costs. In general, due to the lack of incentives, the participation of teachers in such courses is typically low.

In those countries, where major changes (such as curriculum reforms) entailed large-scale training programs they were designed as alternative campaigns to the ordinary in-service systems. These programs typically were organized according to the cascade model, which is – if well done - an excellent tool for specific targeted and close-ended training programs. Nevertheless, in a few countries (like in Romania) it is often considered to be a systemic pattern of in-service training, which is quite problematic in several aspects:

- It does not create balance between supply and the training needs of the schools.
- Actors out of the delivering of educational services set the objectives and the content.
- If institutionalized, inclines to act according to the monopolistic patterns of the "old fashioned" system.

This should remind us of the outstanding importance of the development of a long-term delivery system of training programs while considering the short-term solutions and tools of immediate changes.

The typical style of in-service training programs in the region still mirrors the prevailing style of teaching: frontal lecturing instead of being interactive and skill development oriented. The content of the programs is not less problematic: it reflects the low value of pedagogy in comparison to subject proficiency.

As it was mentioned, the demand for investment into the capacity of specialists of different subsystems of education is not smaller. There is a huge amount of specific jobs that are either completely new in these countries or they should be done in a fast changing environment. For example, training of textbook publishers and authors, trainers, assessment experts for different subjects, administrators, inspectors, principals, curriculum and program developers, evaluators, consultants, financial analysts, etc. might remove serious shortages.

One of the problems in the region is that higher education does not or very slowly responds to the changing needs of pre-university education. This is a very similar characteristic of the HE systems of the CEE countries and not only in terms of the content of teacher training, but also in terms of the structure of courses. It can be demonstrated not only by the fact that there is no one educational policy degree course in the offer of the universities in the region, but also, for example, by the lack of courses on the economics of human resources development. This requires the "relaxation" of the too much academic feature of higher education.

Chapter 4. The key educational policy areas

Summary

- During the transition period the most important "reform issues" on the educational policy agenda of the CEE countries are decentralization and liberalization, redefinition of quality in education, strengthening the links to the labour market, increasing the cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness of education, and equity.
- There are two main directions in the transformation of the old-fashioned political-administrative governance and management systems: (i) building a democratic-political management system that is focused on the political legitimacy of educational decisions, or (ii) building an administrative-professional management system, in which the role of expertise is emphasized. Liberalization of education refers to two overlapping problems: privatization and marketization of educational services.
- The fast changing environment of education entails the redefinition of quality in education. This has serious implications for the definition of educational goals, for curriculum and assessment policies, for textbook publishing provisions and other components of the systemic environment of schools.
- All education systems in the region has to face a dramatic adjustment crisis that is caused by the rapid transformation of the labour markets and in the economies in general. The most visible victims of the decline of external effectiveness of education are the vocational education and training systems.
- Although, in the worst years of economic transition the financial resources deployed for education declined in all of the countries of the region, educational public expenditures as a percent of the GDP was increasing in most countries. In terms of efficiency of usage of financial means there are significant differences among the CEE countries. Nevertheless, in each country financial efficiency and effectiveness should be increased. Most countries transform the system of allocation of resources and attempt to build accountability and more reliable financial information systems.

- The social cohesion of these societies was weakened during the transition process, thus, educational disparities are more and more in the focus of educational policies. There are policies that focus on structural selection and aiming at provide equal access to education, while others rather focus on pedagogical added value and aim at strengthening the equity of educational provisions.

Due to the traditional "command driven" approach to educational policy, different systemic components appear to be policy problems. Therefore, educational reforms in most of the CEE countries aiming at "reforming" the content regulation, examination, textbook publishing, in service and initial teacher training, financing, etc. systems. (See: chart 1.) This mixing of policy problems and policy tools contributes to the further fragmentation of reform strategies. This is the reason, why - although policy makers might be aware of the purpose of the initiated systemic changes - the real policy issues rarely discussed, or are hidden in the discourse on the desired changes in the different subsystems. In general, the connection among educational goals, policy objectives, the sub-components of educational system that transmit policies to the schools and the different sets of policy tools is – at least – not clear in the mind of most policy makers in the region.

One of the reasons for this problems is the fact, that a few of these countries are in a very initial phase of integration to international educational policy co-operation frameworks, such as OECD and the European Union. For most of the Western-European countries this kind of more and more intensified co-operation was very instrumental in fostering the common understanding of the major challenges that all education systems should face. Even if the understanding and the policy interpretation of broader concepts, such as social cohesion or lifelong learning may vary from country to country, the international debate by itself directs the attention to broader strategic issues. Within the context of these concepts curriculum or financing rather appear as components of an available toolkit and not as targets of change.

Since the challenges, the logic and the main directions of educational transition are quite similar in the CEE countries, we are able to identify typical, similar and broad – obviously overlapping - policy issues. Using the term of the region, the main "reform issues" are the following:

- Decentralization and liberalization;
- Redefining quality in education;
- Strengthening the links to the labour market;
- Increasing cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness of education;
- Equity in education

4.1. Decentralization and liberalization in education

In a narrow technical sense decentralization refers to the "location" of decision making. It describes the process of re-distribution of authority among the levels and different actors of educational management. In this sense educational management is considered to be an integral part of the entire public administration system. It means, that to a certain extent, any changes in educational management are driven by changes in the system of public administration in general. This connection is stronger in the countries, where the governance of education is integrated to the public administration (like in Hungary), and weaker in countries, where there is a separate management system organized (like the inspectorates in Romania). It is important to note that devolution of authority to lower levels is not necessarily identical with decentralization. Several times (because of the inefficient allocation of resources, the lack of reliable information or even because of weaker central control) there are concerns about the efficiency of central administration. It might lead to the creation of deconcentrated administrative organizations, which – as far as the result is concerned – can hardly be considered decentralization. In a broader sense devolution not necessarily leads to more local autonomy. The intensity of control varies independently of the locus of control. Thus, decentralization is about the extent to which central governmental responsibility is shared with other actors at lower levels.

The main types of decisions in educational management are: responsibility to operate schools, financing, choice of curricula and teaching materials, examination systems, teacher training, the number of the teachers and their salaries, school construction and maintenance. (Welsh-McGinn, 1999.) Taking into account that the content of management decisions depends on the actual system of content regulation, financing system, teacher training system, system of examinations, etc., decentralization might be interpreted in a broader sense as well. In this sense it refers to a kind of pattern of educational systems, in which other structural components are adjusted or connected to the governance system. Due to the complex nature of educational transition in Central-Eastern Europe, focusing on the narrow technical meaning of the decentralization process is misleading, while its broadened interpretation is a powerful point of departure in understanding the logic of educational change in the region.

Apart from Hungary, which made the first steps of decentralization of its educational system already in 1985, the starting point was very similar both in the Baltic countries that were part of the former Soviet Union, and in the Central-European countries. In this respect the exception is Slovenia, because in the middle of the seventies the so called self-mana-

gement system of the former Yugoslavia created a decentralized public administration framework. Nevertheless, in each countries education was governed according to the decisions of the single political decision making centers. The role of administrative management was to implement political decisions almost exclusively by legal regulations and discrete decisions. This system can be characterized as *political-administrative management system*. The systemic changes immediately put the issue of decentralization on the political agenda. In spite of this, decentralization was rarely regarded as a device for improving the quality of education, or other public services. Rather, it was one of the ways to restructure the framework of distribution of power. There are countries, in which self-governance is traditionally regarded to be a constitutional guarantee against concentration of political power and there are others in which changes in the public administration system simply aimed at replacing the old elite with new ones. In the countries, in which decentralization started already in the early period of the transition process, educational management was the "victim" of politically motivated reforms. For example, in the Czech Republic the former four level system was transformed to a three level system or in Hungary local self-governments became the owners of all institutions that provide public services and the role of regional authorities (e.g. in the allocation of resources) was dramatically reduced. (Halász-Altrichter, 2000.)

The countries of the region moved from the political-administrative management system to two typical directions. According to the traditions of the countries, the political context of the transition process and the inherited administrational system, some countries started to build a *democratic-political management system*, while others opted for an *administrative-professional management system*. In addition, there are countries, (like Slovakia) where the democratic reconstruction of the "political superstructure" so far left the political-administrative management system of education almost untouched.)

In democratic-political management systems the emphasis is on the political legitimacy of educational governance. The main characteristic feature of these systems is the important role of local self-governments, especially in pre-school and basic educational provisions. The members of decision-making bodies are selected by a political process (by elections). This is the direction of decentralization that was chosen by Bulgaria, Poland and Hungary. In administrative-professional systems the role of expertise is emphasized, decisions are made by inspectors, Curriculum Councils, etc. The staff is appointed according to professional criteria. Among others, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Romania follow this direction. Although it is possible to describe the typical direction of decentralization in each country, the clear patterns are quite rare; in several countries these systems combine the elements of the opposite type, as well. In addition it can happen, that a country starts to move to one direction and at a point shifts to another one. This was

the case in Lithuania, where in 1994 the results of the initial decentralization to the municipal level were reversed, and educational management was concentrated to regions, in which autonomy is constrained.

Decentralization in educational management is achieved in different ways in the different countries. The most radical path is the Hungarian one, which is clearly based on the *principle of subsidiarity*. According to this principle "the most effective governance of any organization occurs when authority for decision-making is located as closely *as possible* to the site where actions are taken." (Welsh-McGinn, 1999.) In other words, if a decision can be made in a school it isn't raised to the local authorities, if a decision can be made at local level it isn't raised to regional level, etc. Another typical way of decentralization can be characterized as *fragmented*. There might be decisions that are transferred to regional or local levels (e.g. decision on maintenance cost or in-service teacher training), while others are kept at upper levels (such as curriculum or the salary of the teaching staff). A usual problem caused by the fragmentation of decentralization, is the discrepancy between the location of financial and other types of decisions. The lack of disposition over financial resources might empty the real authority of certain levels and at the same time might re-route decision-making procedures from formal to informal channels. A third possible path of decentralization is the *opening of a deconcentrated management system*. It can be achieved by the establishment of consultative bodies or by prescribing the obligation of negotiation for educational authorities with stakeholders or other ways to involve them in decision-making. In this way, although the decisive role of professional expertise remains, the political legitimacy of governance can be strengthened. The example of Slovenia drives our attention to a specific connection: the impact of the perception of the size of a certain country on the level of decentralization. If the relatively small size of the country is combined with the relatively scarcity of resources the notion of effective and strong state prevailes.

Although the problems of liberalization fit in other sections of this paper, too, it should be briefly explored here, because decentralization and liberalization together create that educational systemic environment, in which the weight of the three types of regulation (administrative, professional and market regulation) can be estimated. Liberalization refers to choice and options. It is about *privatization* (the "division of labour" among the public, NGO and market sectors), and about *marketization* (choice in educational provisions).

Schools and teachers are not only the providers of educational services, but also consumers of others, like training, evaluation and assessment, information, textbook publishing, etc. In the circumstances of structural transformation of educational systems, liberalization of different educational services and decentralization can hardly be separated. Using a real life example of a current policy issue from the following sections, the

transformation of educational governance might go together with the separation of three different functions: control, monitoring of the performance of students and quality management. All of these three functions require the establishment of multilevel systems. One of the first questions to be answered is, at what levels what roles can be played by private enterprises and/or "accredited" independent experts in the new framework of quality management and assessment? In countries, where one of the driving factors of change is privatization, the more liberalization will definitely entail more decentralization in the educational management system. In other cases, when the process is rather driven by changes in the public administration system, decentralization might entail more liberalization. Also, there is a similar connection between the possible diversity of school programs and management: more marketization of educational services might entail marketization of pedagogical services and decentralized decision-making in content regulation, as well.

An important policy issue in each country of the region is the extent to which the system could be decentralized. Putting it in a different way, there is a kind of *border efficiency* of decentralization, which refers to the extent, to which different levels of management are *able to govern effectively* and to which the *authority is* devolved to them is *regarded to be legitimate*. The problem of management capacity is not simply the question of technical expertise. A whole range of conditions should be present in order to secure quality of management, such as financial resources, information, etc. Not surprisingly, the systems that were created bearing in mind the requirements of political legitimacy are struggling with the lack of management capacity at lower levels, those systems, in which "professional expertise" dominates decision making, one of the key policy issues is the democratization of governance.

So far Hungary is the only country in the region that – that for a certain period of time - seemed to be crossing the border efficiency of decentralization. In this country all the local self-governments – even the smallest ones with a couple of hundred size population – almost fully authorized and act as "school boards". (Heavy investment to the capacity of decision makers at the local level gradually help to overcome the difficulties caused by the rapid decentralization.) In the rest of the region there is a huge "reserve space" for decentralization. One of its reasons is the fact, that decentralization is very often considered to be politically risky. Due to the lack of social cohesion or political stability or because of ethnic tensions or governance traditions of the country the notion of "strong state" is popular. In general, the process of decentralization could be regarded as a move from stability assured by strong states, to social cohesion maintained by self-organization and democratic procedures. From this perspective it is a long, step by step process. There are other countries, (like the Czech Republic) in which the concerns and arguments about the border efficiency of decentralization were much stronger, thus steps towards this direction were much cautious.

4.2. Redefining quality in education

Quality in education is always a contextual concept. This statement is rarely more valid than in Central-Eastern Europe after the collapse of the strictly controlled but - for the overwhelming majority - safe environment of the communist regimes. In addition, the uncertainty caused by the rapid economic and social changes is not only a temporary feature of the transition period, but – due to the very nature of the market economy and the postmodern world, in which even knowledge is tentative and provisional– something that "remains with us". Among these circumstances one of the greatest challenges for education is to prepare students to be able to cope with unpredictability, to be able to be flexible and to develop their problem-solving capability. An almost completely different pedagogical paradigm follows from these goals. Therefore, not surprisingly, the quality of educational provisions in the CEE countries is challenged in relation to the teaching-learning process and the work of the schools, as well.

The old fashioned ("command driven") educational model was not really concerned about the pedagogical added value of the teaching process. The success of teaching was regarded to be a certain level, to which pupils were able to acquire prefabricated knowledge and were able to replicate it. This approach to education concentrated on curriculum requirements and on the teachers themselves. The pupils were rather the objects, than the subjects of the pedagogical process. The internal effectiveness of education was measured by rough participation rates and by the achievement of talented, specially coached children at olympiads. Since education in these countries served radically different objectives, compared to what it should serve in a market economy and in a democratic system, different learning outcomes were emphasized. In a planned economy the awareness of factual information was more important, than the application of information. "In a centrally administered economy, to some extent, de-emphasis of problem solving was rational." (Heyneman, 1998) Empirical research evidences prove the long lasting effect of this legacy on the performance of students in these countries. For example, according to the results of the Second International Adult Literacy Survey the average literacy level of the population of Poland, Hungary and Slovenia deeply falls short of the population of any of the western countries. (Tájékoztató..., 2000.) The explanation of these shocking results definitely lies in the fact that for several decades these education systems served so called "low literacy" economies.

The "alternative" pedagogical movement in the 80s represented the first shift from this traditional model in the more open countries. Although the reminiscences of the alternative movement are still affect the thinking of the actors in education, under the pressure of new challenges to education in the 90s the redefinition of quality became one of the central policy issues in these countries, too. One of the focal problems that attracts growing attention is the desire to change the "pedagogical culture" of teaching, that widely considered to be identical with the promotion of differentiated instruction. (See: Box 4.)

Box 4.

The differentiated classroom

Traditional classroom	**Differentiated classroom**
• Student differences are masked or acted upon when problematic	• Student differences are studied as a basis for planning
• Assessment is most common at the end of learning to see "who got it"	• Assessment is ongoing and diagnostic to understand how to make instruction more responsive to learner need
• A relatively narrow sense of intelligence prevails	• Focus on multiple forms of intelligences is evident
• A single definition of excellence exist	• Excellence is defined in large measure by individual growth from a starting point
• Student interest is infrequently tapped	• Students are frequently guided in making interest-based learning choices
• Relatively few learning profile options are taken into account	• Many learning profile options are provided for
• Whole-class instruction dominates	• Many instructional arrangements are used
• Coverage of texts and curriculum guides drives instruction	• Student readiness, interest and learning profile shape instruction
• Mastery of facts and skill out-of-context are the focus of learning	• Use of essential skills to make sense of and understand key concepts and principles is the focus of learning
• Single option assignments are the norm	• Multi-option assignments are frequently used
• Time is relatively inflexible	• Time is used flexibly in accordance in accordance with student need
• A single text prevails	• Multiple materials are provided

• Single interpretations of ideas and events may be sought	• Multiple perspectives and on ideas and events are routinely sought
• The teacher directs student behavior	• The teacher facilitates students' skills at becoming more self-reliant learners
• The teacher solves problems	• Students help other students and the teacher solve problems
• The teacher provides whole-class standards for grading	• Students work with the teacher to establish both whole-class and individual learning goals
• A single form of assessment is often used	• Students are assessed in multiple ways

(Tomlinson, 1999.)

The main matters of the policy discourse in the CEE countries in relation to quality in education are the following:

- the overall goals of education in the rapidly changing environment (e.g. the adjustment of educational goals to the needs of economy and to the democratization of the society),
- the adjustment of educational goals to the expectations of the parents and the children,
- the objective, reliable and valid assessment of children's performance,
- the adjustment of pedagogical methodologies to the abilities, learning styles and special learning needs of the children,
- the changing role of teachers and, as a consequence, the reform of pre-service and in-service teacher training, in general, the professionalisation of teachers. (See: Box 5.)

Box 5.

The requirements of "new professionalism" of teachers

Expertise is the traditional characteristic of the good teacher and will remain essential. The good teacher needs to be an important source of knowledge and understanding. However, the way in which teachers themselves access knowledge needs to change: there should be less reliance on initial training and more on continuous updating.

Pedagogical know-how also continues to be essential, but again in a changing context. In a framework of lifelong learning , teachers have to be competent at transmitting a range of high-level skills including motivation to learn, creativity and co-operation, rather than placing too high a premium on information recall or performance in tests.

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Understanding of technology is a new key feature of teacher professionalism. Most important is an understanding of its pedagogical potential, and an ability to integrate it into teaching strategies.

Organizational competence and collaboration. Teacher professionalism can no longer be seen simply as an individual competence, but rather must incorporate ability to function as part of a "learning organization".

Flexibility. Teachers have to accept that professional requirements may change several times in the course of their careers, and not interpret professionalism as an excuse to resist change.

Mobility is desirable for some if not all teachers. The capacity and willingness to move in and out of other experiences that will enrich their abilities as teachers.

Openness is another skill for many teachers to learn: being able to work with parents other non-teachers in ways that complement rather than subvert other aspects of the teacher's professional role.

(OECD, 1998)

There might be certain obstacles to the professionalisation of teachers in the countries of the region. The tools and conditions of which improvement may promote the professional development of teachers are the following:

- Development of a teacher appraisal system;
- Using a wider range of different incentives (e.g. promotion, differentiation);
- Improving the institutional culture of continuous professional development in schools;
- Investment to an appropriate supply of in-service training;
- Setting qualification requirements for teachers;
- Development of a multi-level system of measurement of students' achievement;
- Fostering communication between pre-higher education and initial teacher training.

Parallel to the redefinition of the quality of teaching, the quality of operation of educational institutions is reconsidered, too. On the one hand, it is the natural consequence of changes in governance, regulation and financing of the system. Schools as institutions and especially the management of schools are more and more charged with functions that they never had to deal with earlier. On the other hand the increasing professional autonomy of schools gradually transform them to be small pedagogical workshops.

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Quality in education can be defined in three ways:

- To meet quality standards developed by experts (e.g. requirements of curricula or exams);
- To meet the requirements that were laid down in a "contract" (e.g. the special program that was offered to the parents by a school);
- To satisfy the demands of each individual "consumers", that is, to meet the specific learning needs of each children.

Although quality assurance policies combine these three approaches, the emphasis might be completely different in different countries. Therefore, the quality improvement strategies in centralized and decentralized systems are typically different. (These are rather directions of policies, than clear options.) More centralized (in the context of the region: less decentralized) systems incline to opt for imposition of standards and usage of external evaluation. For example Lithuania seems to choose this way. More decentralized systems incline to build on local innovation in curriculum development and methodology and on local self-governance, which moves schools closer to the demand of consumers. Hungary is a good example for the latter case.

The typical policy responses to the quality related problems that are raised by the increasing autonomy of schools (such as the lack of incentives, capacities and information) vary from country to country. There are countries that try to transform the old institutional systems of state control (e.g. inspectorates) to a supportive system of pedagogical service, training and quality assurance. There are others, which simply eliminated the old system of control and develop a new system of pedagogical services and in service training, which is based on the combination of liberalized free market service and the network of public institutions maintained by regional or local educational authorities. From another point of view, there are countries that consider the problem as a *school management* issue, while others follow a broader *school improvement* approach.

Of course, the creation of "high standard" schools was always the concern of stakeholders in education at the bottom level of the system in the region. However, as Janos Setényi described it, *high standard* and *quality* schools are almost completely different institutions. (Setényi, 1999)

High Standard School	Quality School
Selective "creaming off" of students.	Undertaking the given group of students.
Overtaking the others, getting experimental programs approved.	Development of a program that adjusted to the users.
Maximising the stated number of teachers and lessons.	Improvement of the routine professional work.
Getting obtain the best teachers.	Building a teaching staff that shares the same mission.
Achieving outstanding learning results, preparing students for competitions.	Taking care to individual learning tracks.

The quest for quality of education from the point of view of final consumers more and more drives the attention to the services that are provided for schools. As it was already mentioned, education can be seen as the end product of a chain of providers and consumers. Teachers and schools are "internal consumers" (Murgatroyd-Morgan, 1998.) of a big variety of services, which influence the quality of the teaching process itself.

Not surprisingly, the move to a learner and consumer centered approach to quality in education automatically questions the existing content regulation system. While reconsidering broad educational objectives and responding to the challenges of the overall structural reform of the entire public sphere, the CEE countries face the problems of transformation and adjustment of the *content regulation system* and changing the *content of education* at the same time.

There are countries, which already reorganized and decentralized their content regulation systems, like Poland with the "author's curricula" or Hungary with the "local pedagogical programs". At the same time there are others that still maintain the strict central regulation (e.g. Slovakia or Latvia). In most of the countries changes in the content regulation system strengthened the professional autonomy of schools, whether by leaving space in the total teaching time for local for reflecting local consideration, (for example, 30% in Estonia or in the Czech Republic) or by relaxing the regulation in terms of teaching hours or content. The debate on the new system of content regulation is in the center of the discussion on educational reform in each country. Disregarding the ideological and political considerations that influence this debate, the main and typical policy questions are the following:

- The level of diversification of content, specially in lower and upper secondary education;
- The extent of liberalization of content regulation (level of professional autonomy of schools, influence of different stakeholders, the vertical and horizontal mobility of students);
- Content regulation and school structure (school types versus program types, the length of pedagogical phases, vocational versus general education, etc.)
- Balance between input regulation and output regulation (hard input regulation with soft examination system, or liberalized curriculum with hard, multilevel examination system);
- The level of content regulation (the role of government, ministry of education, in the case of vocational training other ministries, regional or local authorities, school maintainers and the schools);
- The connection between content regulation and financing;
- The devices of input regulation (knowledge requirement standards versus curricula containing knowledge and skill development requirements, subject based or broader subject area based curriculum, curriculum circles for different levels of education or one linear curriculum, etc.);
- The institutional framework of content development, curriculum development capacities at the relevant levels of the system (e.g. the role of NGOs or enterprises in curriculum and program development);
- The "reform" of examination system (the role and content of school leaving examinations, connecting the secondary graduating exams and the university entrance exams, the validity and objectivity of examinations, etc.).

The debate on the content of education can hardly be interpreted only within the scope of pedagogy and educational policy. The issue that is in the heart of the discourse, is the societal validity of knowledge that is taught in the schools, and again, the overall goals of education in a rapidly changing society. All kinds of opinions on the relative weight of subjects or on the new sets of knowledge (like multicultural, health, environment or civic education) are influenced by ideological and political considerations. A new problem that recently appeared on the policy agenda of a few countries in the region is the incorporation of the "European dimension" to the content of education.

The main problem that these countries are struggling with, is the way, in which a new equilibrium can be reached among three quite controversial requirements. These are to preserve or reinforce the national cultural heritage (in the broadest sense), to incorporate the new sets of knowledge of a modern, multicultural and post-industrial

society and to leave enough space for the development of skills, that is, to decrease the quantity of knowledge which the existing overloaded curricula contains. Overcoming "factology" in curricula means overcoming the strong "subject lobbies" and to promote the acceptance of a radical pedagogical paradigm shift among the actors of education.

In decentralized and liberalized educational systems assessment is equally important and effective device for content regulation as curricula or standards. Examinations and monitoring of the performance of the students determine the objectives and content of the teaching-learning process. In spite of the curriculum reforms in the first part of the 90s, in the countries of the region - partly due to the decentralized and school based system of examinations and the lack of reliable assessment at all levels of education - the rigid, overloaded and knowledge oriented curricula survive. The systems of examinations are rarely modified. Although in a few countries (such as in Estonia) there are transition examinations, in most of them the only school leaving external exam is the maturity examination, which remained school based in all of the countries. The only countris, where the maturity exam and the university entrance examinations are linked up are Slovenia and Lithuania, in the rest of the countries the latter is controlled by the universities. Due to the school based and typically oral examinations there is no comparable feed back on the performance of the students.

Textbooks are often called "hidden curricula". Especially in periods, when the stability of content regulation is weakened (i.e. teachers are not prepared to work according to the rapidly changing curricula) the "regulative role" of textbooks becomes more important. One of the common features of these countries is the lack of effective quality assurance systems in the already liberalized free market of the textbook publishing industry, which would secure harmony between content curricula and textbooks. Due to the lack of financial resources and development capacity textbooks are rarely supported with teacher's manuals and other teaching materials.

4.3. Strengthening the links to labour market

Probably the most visible and most powerful point of departure for any educational reform initiative in the region is the dramatic adjustment crises caused by the increasing discrepancy between the fast changing economic system and the labour market on the one hand, and the slowly changing educational system on the other. The collapse of the safe market of Comecon led to a huge decline in growth rates, industrial production growth rates and a sudden increase of inflation and unemployment rates in all of the countries of the region. There were countries, like Poland that – due to the "shock therapy" of the government - passed the worst period already in 1990 and there were others, like the Baltic countries that suffered the hardest period only after the regained independence, in 1992-1993. Also the degree of the worsening of the main economic indicators was different in the region. Nevertheless, these fast changes in a relatively short period, then the slow recovery of these economies leading to GDP growth in the second part of the decade are the signs of deep structural transformation of the economic systems. (See: table 1.)

As far as the effect on the external effectiveness of education is concerned, the most striking features of this economic change are the increasing youth unemployment rate and the transformation of the internal structure of the employed labour force. For example, in he middle of the hardest period, in 1993 the youth unemployment rate was 21% in Bulgaria, 32% in Estonia, 24 % in Hungary and 47 % in Latvia. (UNICEF IRC, 2000.) Also, the role and perception of education is changing. During the communist period the private returns of education in terms of wages were very low. The transition in economy, however, completely changed the predictions and conditions for career success, and education became one of the most important factors, it became an economic asset. (Koucky, 1996)

The major trends on the labour markets of these countries, which present major challenges to education are the following:

- The changing nature of work;
- Decreasing weight of employment and increasing weight of self-employment;
- Increasing unemployment among those, who didn't acquire the skills that are needed in the new emerging economies;
- The increasing shortage of skilled labour force in several segments of economy because of the mismatch between supply and demand;

- Jobs for life are the thing of the past;
- The number of big enterprises is declining, the number of small and medium size enterprises is increasing;
- The effects of new information and communication technologies;
- The increasing internal and external mobility of labour.

No educational change is able to follow or to adjust immediately to this fast transformation of the labour market. At a point of economic growth the low external effectiveness of education gradually becomes one of the major obstacles to further expansion and development of production and modernization of the economies of the region. The most obvious victims of the adjustment crisis are the vocational education and training systems. The former well established links between schools and state owned companies almost completely collapsed and there are a big number of schools still "educating" unemployed graduates. (A frequently cited example is the ongoing training of miners in countries where most of the mines have gone busted and were closed.)

Peter Grootings differentiated three interrelated aspects of the adjustment crisis of education in the countries in the region: modernization, structural reform and systemic reform. (Grootings, 1995)

Modernization refers to the content of education. It refers to initiatives aiming at updating the curricula, renewal of equipment, improving teachers' qualification, redefinition of education profiles, modification of occupational standards, creation of relevant assessment and changing the approaches to education in general. Modernization measures have an important role to play in facilitating the transition from education to work. The first major steps in this direction are to ensure a closer link between academic and practical learning, to foster the acquisition of core skills, to reduce the level of specialization in the initial stages of vocational training, to develop specific educational provisions for disadvantaged students and to create the system of vocational counselling and guidance. Some elements of these policy steps were already initiated in a few countries but these are far from satisfactory and effective.

Structural reform refers to matters such as the system of qualifications, the structure of schools, the streams and flow of students, the relationship between types and levels of education, possibilities of transferring among levels and branches and the shift from input control to output control.

In relation to the structure of education one of the major policy issues is the ongoing debate on the traditional division of vocational, technical and general education. The great difference between the extremely specialized job-depending vocational and the highly academic general education

is questioned in most of the countries. There are two typical policy alternatives in this respect: the first tries to increase enrollment in general upper secondary education, which will be followed by vocational programs at the post-secondary level or on-the-job, the second tries to combine academic content with broadly defined occupational orientation in a modular system. (There are countries, which combine the two kinds of policies.) In addition, transition of the labour market challenges the structure of education at another important sector: the training and education of the adult population. In order to provide learning opportunities for those, whose education level or specific vocation doesn't fit to the demand of the labour market, heavy investment to the expansion of adult education is essential.

Partly due to several deliberate policy initiatives and incentives and partly in a spontaneous way, structural adjustment at the level of secondary education already started in the region. The signs of structural change are the following: (Jones, 1995)

- In spite of the demographic decline of the relevant age groups enrolment in general education is increasing.
- Apart from the Baltic countries, enrolment in secondary level vocational education is declining.
- Due to the privatization and/or disappearance of big companies, enrolment in apprentice schools is declining.
- The number of multiprofile and combined types of schools is increasing, such as the "integrated schools" in the Czech Republic that are combined technical/vocational schools, or the combined comprehensive/technical schools in Hungary.

There are three important structure related obstacles that policy makers are more and more aware of in these countries. The first is, as it was already mentioned, the still strong divison of upper secondary education to general, technical and extremely specialized vocational schools and the relatively low enrolment rate in general education, which is one of the main obstacles to the expansion of post-secondary and higher education. The second is the low level of equity in education, that is the high proportion of students that are falling behind, which is a major obstacle to the expansion of general secondary education. The third obstacle to any kind of structural change is the existing allocation of all kinds of resources (school buildings, equipment, qualification structure of the teaching staff, etc.) that fitted well to the previous structure but doesn't mach to the new one that is intended to be created. Consequently, structural policies require heavy capital investment and intensified further and re-training programs.

Systemic reform refers to the relationship with the employment system, to the changes of different kinds of organizational and institutional settings and to the decentralization of decision making.

In order to strengthen the links between education and the labour market five major systemic changes seems to be important.

- The first is to overcome a special problem of the Central-European and Baltic countries: the artificial segmentation of policies due to the inherited government level management structure. (During the communist period higher education and vocational training were structured and governed according to economic sectors as they were divided among and supervised by different ministries.) The organizational conditions of a more comprehensive policy approach to labour market intervention, economic development and education should be created.
- The second policy direction might be the resetting of the share of public authorities, companies and households in the financing system of education. Especially incentives and regulations should be created for enterprises to enhance their contribution to the costs of vocational education and training.
- The third necessary policy step in this regard is the creation of decentralized and flexible structures that allow a closer local co-operation between schools and enterprises.
- The fourth is the involvement of social partners to decision making and policy negotiations at all levels of education as it happened in Slovenia and Hungary. For example the creation of tripartite collective bargaining frameworks may play an important role. A specific matter in relation to responding to labour market needs is the involvement of employer organizations in the definition of qualification requirements.
- The fifth system related development is the creation of a more reliable labour market monitoring and information system.

A specific problem of the region during the transition period is the contradiction between the steps to be made towards a more and more labour market demand driven educational system and the lack of clear demand on the side of economy in a certain group of the countries. Again, it is about the constrains of external factors of educational change. How Ana Maria Sandi put it "it is very difficult to make education structures responsive to labour markets and technological changes, if such markets and technological changes are not yet significant." (Sandi, 1997) For example graduates with well developed communication, team working, learning and computer skills entering the world of work in a surviving state owned factory giant, say in Romania, will rather be punished than rewarded. There is a mutually determining relationship between transition in education and in economy: on the one hand low external effectiveness of education is an obstacle to economic development and on the other hand, lack of clearly defined and articulated demand from the labour market is an obstacle to educational change.

4.4. Financing of education: cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness

In relation to educational financing three questions deserve attention:

1. Are the education systems of the region under funded?
2. Are the available financial resources used in an efficient way?
3. How cost-effective are these educational systems?

One of the evergreen complaints about the state of education in the countries of the region is that governments fail to provide proper funding for education. No doubt, during the last decade the amount of financial resources deployed for education declined dramatically in absolute terms. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily answer the question: is education regarded to be a high priority sector by governments or not? We will be able to form a notion about it, if we compare the changes of educational expenditure with changes of the GDP and the total public expenditure. In comparison to the growth of GDP, in the worst years, (in 1991 and 1992) when most of the countries were at the edge of economic collapse, the educational expenditure as a percent of GDP was increasing in all of the countries. (See: table 1.) Of course, there were countries, where the price of these efforts was paid later, like in Hungary, where real expenditure on education declined in 1995-1996. However, the data clearly show that governments made a serious effort in order to preserve the given level of educational services. Looking at the changes of the share of educational expenditure in total public expenditure a more detailed picture can be drawn. There are two countries in which the positions of education became better; these are Hungary and Lithuania. In the Czech Republic and Estonia the changes of educational expenditure roughly followed the changes of total government expenditure. Probably due to rapidly changing political priorities the main feature of changes in Poland, in Latvia and in Slovenia is that it is hectic. Nevertheless, these changes of the share of educational expenditure are not so dramatic in Latvia and Slovenia as in Poland. The financial positions of education clearly worsened in Slovakia, to a tremendous extent in Bulgaria and in the first part of the decade in Romania. (See: table 2.) In general, the decline of the amount of financial resources in the region is caused rather by the decline of GDP and total public expenditure than the "hostile" policies of governments or the low value of education. In most of the countries in comparison with other sectors education enjoyed a relatively protected financial position.

Table 1.
Gross domestic product growth rates in constant prices (GDP) and Education expenditures as the percentage of GDP (EE). (Annual percentage change 1991-1996.)

Country	1991		1992		1993		1994		1995		1996	
	GDP	EE	GDP	EE	GDP	EE	GDP	EE	GDP	EE	GDP	EE
Czech Rep.	-11.5	6.2	-3.3	5.8	0.6	0.0	2.7	-3.8	5.9	-2.0	1.0	5.8
Hungary	-11.9	4.8	-3.1	11.6	-0.6	18.7	2.9	3.5	1.5	-5.1	1.0	3.5
Poland	-7.0	1.8	2.6	7.1	3.8	-13.4	5.2	-15.5	7.0	15.9	6.0	-4.0
Slovakia	-14.6	8.6	-6.5	4.7	-3.7	-1.6	4.9	-1.6	6.8	-12.6	6.9	-10.8
Bulgaria	-11.7	1.9	-7.3	19.6	-2.4	-6.6	1.8	-15.8	2.1	-14.6	-10.9	-14.7
Romania	-12.9	28.5	-8.7	0.0	1.5	-8.4	3.9	-6.1	7.1	9.6	4.1	2.9
Slovenia	-8.9	-	-5.5	14.5	2.8	5.4	5.3	-5.2	4.1	5.4	3.1	0.0
Estonia	-7.9	-	-14.2	-	-8.5	14.7	-1.8	-5.8	4.3	6.0	4.0	-
Latvia	-10.4	-12.5	-34.9	9.5	-14.9	32.6	0.6	0.0	-0.8	9.8	2.8	-3.8
Lithuania	-13.4	-	-37.4	-	-24.2	-	1.0	0.0	3.0	0.0	3.6	0.0

(Source: UNICEF TRANSMONEE database)

Table 2.
General government expenditures (GGE) and education expenditures (EE) as the percentage of GDP. (Annual percentage change 1991-1996.)

Country	1991		1992		1993		1994		1995		1996	
	GGE	EE	GGE	EE	GGE	EE	GGE	EE	GGE	EE	GGE	EE
Czech Rep.	-	6.2	-	5.8	-	0.0	3.3	-3.8	0.2	-2.0	-1.4	5.8
Hungary	1.4	4.8	13.4	11.6	0.9	18.7	-0.2	3.5	-9.7	-5.1	-10.9	3.5
Poland	22.8	1.8	3.0	7.1	0.1	-13.4	-2.6	-15.5	1.4	15.9	-	-4.0
Slovakia	-	8.6	-	4.7	-	-1.6	-6.9	-1.6	-2.1	-12.6	-1.5	-10.8
Bulgaria	-30.9	1.9	-0.5	19.6	5.9	-6.6	-5.0	-15.8	-6.0	-14.6	10.6	-14.7
Romania	0.0	28.5	8.5	0.0	-18.6	-8.4	-0.9	-6.1	1.7	9.6	-2.4	2.9
Slovenia	-17.2	-	11.4	14.5	1.9	5.4	-1.3	-5.2	-0.9	5.4	0.0	0.0
Estonia	-	-	-	-	15.4	14.7	-5.0	-5.8	6.5	6.0	-1.0	-
Latvia	-	-12.5	-	9.5	24.8	32.6	8.5	0.0	6.0	9.8	-0.8	-3.8
Lithuania	-21.2	-	-19.2	-	6.3	-	-12.1	0.0	-4.8	0.0	-3.6	0.0

(Source: UNICEF TRANSMONEE database)

As a result, the extent of declination of financial resources didn't reach that level in most of these countries, (as it happened in the Caucasus or Central-Asian countries) when policy makers have to raise the question: do we afford the same level of participation rates that we built up during the Soviet period? Most of the Central-European countries managed to preserve almost the same enrollment rates and achieved an impressive expansion of higher education. The price that was paid for this is the decline of value of the salaries of teachers and – apart from Hungary – the dramatic decline of capital investment to education.

Since the biggest proportion of educational expenditures is deployed for the salaries of teachers a widely used indicator of cost-efficiency of education is the pupil-teacher ratio. At the beginning of the transition period it ranged from 10.7 in Estonia to 20.8 in the Czech Republic. There was a visible difference between the Central-European and the Baltic countries. The highest rate among the Baltic countries was 12.6 in Lithuania, while the average ratio of students to teaching staff in the rest of the countries was 17.5 The only country in the latter group, in which this ratio was under 15 was Hungary. In the last decade in most of the countries this ratio declined, but there was only two, where this declination was really serious: Romania with 5.2 and the Czech Republic with 6.3 lower teacher-student ratios. (The OECD average ratio is 18.2 in primary and 14.4 in secondary education.) One of the similar features of these countries is the low proportion of non-teaching supporting staff in the schools (such as counselors, psychologists, social workers, etc.). This is related to the low level of integration in these systems. Students with diverse special learning needs are typically taught in separate institutions, so these professionals are trained and employed separately from the mainstream system. Not only the pedagogical effectiveness, but also the cost-efficiency of this high level of separation is to be questioned in most of these countries.

There are three typical answers to the decline of the public funding of education: (1) attempts to increase the efficiency of the usage of resources by changing the system of allocation, (2) "rationalization" of the systems and (3) diversification of the financing system, mobilization of alternative resources.

Several countries moved to a normative, per student based state financing system. On the one hand, it provided a better position for ministries of education in the annual budget bargains and made the financing system more transparent, on the other hand, – due to the demographic decline – it automatically pulled out resources from the system. Also, in several countries steps were made in order to increase accountability of lower level institutions (e.g. local governments and schools) and to

create an auditing system. Nevertheless, because of the inappropriate system of allocation and the lack of planning in several countries financing can hardly be used as a policy device for influencing processes in the system. (For example using financial incentives in order to redirect the flow of students or to shape structural changes.)

Under the pressure of more and more scarce resources and - as a consequence - the pressure of influential interest groups, the main priority of governments for a long time was to preserve the actual level of educational services. Most of the governments avoided putting on the policy agenda the problem of rationalization of the educational system. The first policies aiming at reducing the specific cost of educational provisions and to improve the main indicators were launched in a few countries at the middle of the decade. There were, and still there are two main groups of obstacles to rationalization. The first is a kind of political problem, the issue of tradeoffs between equality of access, choice and diversification of programs, preservation of population keeping capacity of small villages, protection of teachers' jobs, etc. on the one hand and cost-efficiency on the other. The second obstacle is a more concrete one: rationalization has its immediate cost. Most of the countries simply can not afford the short term investments aiming at saving money in the long run. These are the lump-sum settlement and retraining of fired teachers, investment to a better financial monitoring and information system, amalgamation of institutions, transportation of children to the neighbouring settlement in case of unifying small schools, more economic heating systems and school buildings, etc.

All of these countries try to mobilize additional financial resources. This pressure gradually reconstructs the relative share of the financial contribution of public and nonprofit organizations, companies and households. Inside of the public resources the share of local taxation and other incomes of local governments play a more and more important role in several countries. Also the contribution of enterprises to the financing of vocational education and training is increasing in a few countries. A special Central-European problem is that the perceived connection between private taxation and public supply is still weak, public money is still considered to be "free money". This results in a big pressure on the governments to preserve free educational services, which is an obstacle to the creation of a new balance among the different sources of educational financing.

Cost-effectiveness, in its broadest sense, describes the extent to which the public and private costs and the public and private benefits of all kinds of educational provisions are connected. Therefore, the cost-effectiveness of educational systems can be measured against four different sets of outcomes:

1. learning outcomes, the achievement of students,
2. systemic outcomes, such as graduation rates at different levels of education or the expected length of schooling,
3. labour market outcomes, such as private and public benefits in terms of wages and lowered risk of unemployment, and
4. social outcomes.

Due to the traditional command driven approach to education, public expenditure rarely connected to educational outcomes other than the systemic ones. As it was already mentioned, the pedagogical added value and the opportunities opened by different types of educational provisions were not in the focus of the discourse on financing. Because of the lack of multilevel systems of monitoring of students achievement, educational information systems, empirical research and cost benefit analysis capacity, what we know about the cost-effectiveness of these educational systems is mainly what we do not know. (Probably the lack of reliable, internationally comparable information is one of the reasons for the prevailing strong focus on the amount of allocated money and the ignorance of other aspects of the problem.)

As a consequence, very important policy questions remain unanswered. Depending on the amount and kind of available information, it is hard or almost impossible to make decisions on the reallocation of financial resources among the different levels, branches and types of education in a way, which increases the cost-effectiveness of these systems. Therefore the contribution of education to economic productivity or to different social outcomes, such as increased civic participation, better health, lower crime rates, reduced social security costs, increased tax revenues or reduced social inequality, is frequently underestimated or even overemphasized. Not only the public benefits, but also the private returns of educational provisions are ignored. This leads to the lack of clear policy on the desirable share of different financial contributors to education.

It should be noted that education not always serves good purposes or objectives. The examples are the segregated education of Roma students, the separated education of those handicapped children, whose kind and extent of disability not justifies it or the tracking of the disadvantaged, low social status students to low value added vocational programs. In these cases increasing funding results in increased damage that these programs cause.

4.5. Equity in education

As it was mentioned in the previous section, the social outcomes of education are as significant as the labour market outcomes. Education is one of the most important public sectors that are able to strengthen the cohesion of a society. In the circumstances of the transition process this function of education is more important than ever before. The success of the transition to a great extent depends on the ability of a society to maintain social and political stability. It can not be achieved without deliberate policies aiming at reducing the number of losers of the thorough changes that occur in all of the countries in the region. In comparison to the communist period societal inequalities have increased in social, economic, territorial and ethnic terms, as well. The socio-economic status, the place of residence, the family background, the individual abilities or the affiliation to different minorities imposes a greater and more visible impact on the life chances of the individuals.

Education in the region is traditionally regarded to be something, which is good in itself. There are widely shared illusions that access to the benefits of education automatically results in significant decrease of social inequalities. This was the reason, why educational policies focused on access and participation. This policy pattern was well established by the social mobility campaigns in the thirties in the Soviet Union and in the fifties in the Central European countries. According to its own terms this policy was extremely successful. During the communist period illiteracy almost completely disappeared in these countries, enrolment to primary education - both for girls and boys - became universal. The expansion of vocational training well served the industrial modernisation of these countries and provided a good basis for full employment.

As a consequence of the pessimist sociology of the sixties and seventies ("education does not makes any difference") a new approach to education emerged in the region. The research results of this period in a few countries clearly demonstrated that education is not working in a social vacuum. Although the educational systems of the previous regime were regarded to be equitable, for several researchers it became clear that in terms of learning outcomes these systems are not necessarily more equitable than the western ones. For example, the over-representation of students with higher socio-economic status in higher education was explained by the fact that at the level of secondary

education students with different social background were and still are distributed among different types of institutions. It was documented that the distribution of students to vocational, technical and general secondary education was based on the different level of achievement at the primary level. Due to the increasing social differences and inequalities during the transition period, this selective characteristic of the educational systems of the region became more striking. In spite of the surviving illusions about the possible role of education, it is more and more clear that the complete equalizing of all the possible disadvantages is neither a realistic objective nor a genuine educational policy issue.

There are several structural signs of the high level of selectivity and exclusion in these systems. These signs are the following (Radó, 1999):

- The growing private sector for those who can afford it;
- The system of elite public schools, mainly in general secondary education;
- The separate system of special schools for disabled children;
- Institutionalized segregation of Roma and other minority children;
- Repositories in vocational education, i.e. low value added dead-end tracks for children with low socio-economic status;
- Unfair streaming of students.

The selective educational systems of these countries reward the children whose parents are wealthy, whose cultural background is rich or are simply more talented than the medium and punish the rest of the children. Due to the lack of the conditions of fair streaming, in many cases selection depends on affluence, geographical location or ethnicity, rather than the ability of the children.

The problem of structural selectivity is partly related to the policy trade-off between choice and comprehensive education. As it was mentioned earlier, there is an ongoing debate in most of the countries about the extent and level of diversity in terms of content and school types. One of the important components of this problem is the fact, that diversity at any level influences the previous levels. For example, if there is a high level diversity at the upper secondary level, teachers at lower secondary level will prepare students for different upper secondary tracks, even if the content regulation of the lower level does not allow for diverse programs. It might open space for disparities. In addition, structural selection has a detrimental effect on the quality of teaching. In different types of schools the expectations of the teachers are typically adjusted to the type of the school. These expectations are self-fulfilling prophecies, in the long run they determine the performance of the children.

Since the high level of selection in education appears to be a structural problem, policies aiming at making the system more equitable are operating with structural tools. The typical policies of this kind are the following:

- Centralisation; standardisation of inputs and outputs in education;
- Reducing the diversification of school types, creating a comprehensive school system;
- Reducing the diversification of school programs, strict content (input) regulation;
- Expansion of comprehensive secondary education, which supposes to "automatically" increase the participation of disadvantaged students;
- Second chance schools, creating a separate system for disadvantaged students.

Although, because of the lack of information it is hard to assess the results of these policies, we may assume that structural policies fail to increase equity in the education of the CEE countries for several reasons. For example, standardisation of inputs results in different amount of inputs to children in different tracks of the system. In fact, standardisation in most cases increases inequality instead of reducing it. According to the experiences of several western countries and the Central-European countries in the communist period, if the quality of education is poor, comprehensive systems simply replace the overt structural selection with hidden "pedagogical" selection. Strict content regulation also has a bad effect on equity, because it does not leave space for adjustments in the curricula to the different learning needs of the children. It seems to be an illusion, too, that the expansion of general secondary education automatically results in increased participation of disadvantaged students.

There are several problems with the creation of second chance schools in the countries of the region, as well. Due to the unpreparedness of mainstream schools there is a great pressure in these systems for separation. Most of the students with special educational needs, such as the children with less serious mental disabilities or with behavioural problems are taught separately in special schools or classes. Therefore, there is a concern that the creation of new separate institutional settings will result in the creation of new dead-end tracks in the system. An additional problem is that the resources deployed for education are not used in an efficient way. Instead of making use of the hidden capacity reserves in the systems, the establishment of second chance schools builds up new capacities, which these countries can hardly afford to maintain.

In general, structural policies tend to address the results of low level of equity instead of its reasons. All of the different signs of structural selection are more or less rooted in the low effectiveness of the teaching-learning process in the mainstream schools. For example, the demand for private or elite public schooling is bigger, if the quality of education in ordinary mainstream schools is considered to be poor. The unfair streaming of students is to a great extent caused by the lack of a fair system of assessment. And also, the pressure for the maintenance of separated institutions or even segregated schools is partly caused by the unpreparedness of mainstream schools for integrated education. (Radó, 1999.)

There are several reasons, why educational policies in the region are still oriented to structural problems. First of them is the logic of the transition process, itself. The reform of entire institutional systems leaves no space and attention to the "details" of quality related issues. In addition policy makers are working with incomplete information. The available statistical data, such as enrolment and dropout rates drive the attention to the major structural problems. On the other hand, due to the lack of monitoring of students' performance the internal educational disparities remain invisible.

The concerns about the quality of teaching in relation to the different groups of disadvantaged children are justified by the fact that the number and proportion of students who are falling behind is relatively high in these countries. These rates are outstanding from the point of view of systemic outcomes (e.g. number of dropouts) and learning outcomes (e.g. graduates with low literacy skills), as well. This problem is mainly caused by the transformation of social disparities to school failure during the teaching-learning process in formal education. It means that policies aiming at strengthening equity should attempt to realign education in order to make it capable of taking into account

- the individual needs of each children (such as children with mental or physical disabilities),
- the adaptation to the needs of different target groups (such as minorities, refugees or immigrants),
- the adaptation to the changing needs of individual persons and the society as a whole.

This understanding of equity in education means that policies should be refocused from social disadvantages to educational disparities, from structural tools to functional ones.

Box 6.

The inclusion of students with special educational needs

Special education systems have developed in order to cater for those children who stretch regular provisions to a point where additional resources must be made available to provide the extra support needed for efficient learning. Although this provisions began in special establishments, over the past 50 years there has been a steadily increasing pressure to educate students with disabilities in mainstream schools. As a result of an overview of the experience of OECD countries seven issues turned to be significant in this respect:

- Funding models; extra funds may support exclusion or does not encourage regular schools to keep students with disabilities in mainstream education.
- Systems of public accountability should likewise not work in such a way to encourage exclusion.
- Pupil assessment should be individualised and support the development of improved pedagogies, curriculum differentiation and school wide curriculum development.
- Teacher:student ratios need to be reduced through the use of specialist teachers and assistants allied to increased flexibility in class size and composition.
- The part-time or full-time presence of classroom assistant allocated specifically to nable targeted support.
- The functioning of support services such as school psychologist and social workers, should be mainly to empower the school and the teachers to become their own problem-solvers by passing on their skills and supporting teachers rather than students.
- Training systems for teachers and other professionals should be oriented for preparing trainees for the demands of working in inclusive settings.

(OECD, 1999.)

Probably the most striking and complex equity related problem in the majority of the countries of the region is the dramatic under-achievement of Roma students and the huge educational gap between the Roma and majority population. For example, the drop out rate at secondary level among Roma students is about 50%, or more than 60% of school aged Roma children leave the school prematurely in Slovakia. The common feature of policies that address the problems of Roma students in the region – if there is any – a kind of reductionist approach to the complexity of the underlying problems. There is

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no one single policy document approved in the region that takes into consideration all of the components that contribute to the failure of Roma children: the discrimination (i.e. segregation of Roma students and the different ways of detrimental pedagogical treatment), the lack of assertion of minority rights (i.e. the access to the learning of the language(s) and culture of the Roma communities), the socio-economic status of the Roma families (i.e. lack of welfare and affirmative measures connected with the financial burden of schooling) and the poor quality of teaching in the schools, where Roma students are taught. (See: Box 7.) Of course, the educational problems of minorities not less striking in those countries, where the number of Roma communities is not that big like in Slovakia, Hungary, Romania or Bulgaria. For example, the education of ethnic Russians in the Baltic countries is in the focus of educational policies.

Box 7.

Policies for students with ethnic affiliation

Affirmative action addresses the problems generated by lower socio-economic status of minority groups that is the effect of past discrimination. Therefore policies of this kind aim at social and economic integration of the ethnic groups. The two major types of these policies are *preferential affirmative action* (e.g. quotas, lower threshold at entrance to universities, free studies, etc.) and the *developmental affirmative action* (scholarships, preparatory zero grades, etc.). Affirmative action is colour conscious and culture neutral.

Assurance of minority rights addresses the gaps between the rights of persons belonging to any minority groups and the practice in which these right often do not prevail. In education its basic objective to provide access to the language and culture of the respected minority group. The typical tools of policies of this kind are the different types of minority education programs (mother tongue education, bilingual education, programs containing the teaching of minority language and culture) and intercultural learning. Policies based on the assurance of minority rights are colour blinded and culture conscious.

Anti-discrimination policy is aiming at eliminate all kinds of overt, institutionalised discrimination (segregation), as well as its rather hidden forms, such as pedagogical practises that are based o stereotyping and biased expectations. The typical tools of these policies are regulation (the prohibition and sanctioning of discrimination), monitoring of discrimination, anti-bias and awareness-raising training and strengthening the multicultural content and feature of mainstream education. Anti-discrimination policies are colour blinded and in most cases culture blinded.

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Quality assurance policies address the educational inequalities in an ethnically neutral way. These policies aim at strengthening equity in education, that is, attempt to overcome those problems that are generated by the pedagogical unpreparedness of teachers and schools and strive to reduce unfair tracking within the system. The policies based on quality related concern use "genuine" educational development tools that may improve the quality of teaching and learning and may promote differentiated instruction. Quality assurance policies are colour blinded and culture neutral.

Due to the often complex nature of inequalities related to ethnicity most of the policies designed to tackle the education related problems of children with ethnic affiliation are combine the tools of these policies. A typical problem of these policies are the often not well sought trade-offs among the sometimes contradictory tools of these policies and the sometimes reductionist approach to the complexity of the underlying problems, both in relation to the educational context and the context of the inter-ethnic relations. Most countries base their policies on the false assumption that one package of policy tools may well serve the needs of each minorities living in the country. The combination of the above described policies often called in the CEE countries "positive discrimination". The meaning and the practical policy implications of this phrase is rather unclear. (Radó, 1997.)

No doubt, there are no magic policy bullets that make education more equitable. Complex and coherent packages of policy tools should be developed in order to target the problems of individual children or specific groups of children with special educational needs, specific groups of schools or geographical regions. The major policy issues in the CEE countries in relation to equity in education are the following:

- The creation of a multilevel assessment, evaluation and educational information system in order to identify educational disparities in terms of resources, access, processes and outcomes.
- The quality of basic education, supporting innovation for learner centred, differentiated teaching.
- Changing content regulation and the system of examinations in order to create a fair system of streaming of students.
- Reducing territorial inequalities.
- Prohibition and monitoring of all kinds of educational discrimination, assuring internationally accepted rights of children and minorities.

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- Monitoring of stereotyped, racist and gender biased content and treatment of children; strengthening public consensus on ethically incorrect or illegitimate educational disparities.
- Providing access to the acquisition of the language and culture of children with minority affiliation; supporting and development of multicultural education.
- Inclusion of physically and mentally handicapped children, creation of the conditions of integrated education.
- Compensation of the effects of low socio-economic status by welfare services in education.
- Integration of different services (social care, labour, health, etc.) at the local level, creating co-operation networks among these services.
- Opening up the schools to the parents and in general to the community.

Chapter 5.
External challenges to policy making: accession to the EU

Summary

- The main external challenge to educational policy making for the majority of the CEE countries is the enlargement process of the European Union. Nevertheless, the policy implications of the accession rarely explored in these countries.
- Since the middle of the nineties two major changes strengthened the European educational policy dimension: (i) the development of a shared holistic educational vision, which is based on the life-long learning paradigm and (ii) the growing weight educational measures in social and labour policies.
- The participation of the CEE countries in European education programs generate a learning process by which the culture, the procedural rules and co-operation technics become accessible.
- The direct adjustment expectations in education are relatively easily achievable, whereas the indirect challenges, such as realignment of policies in compliance of the European mainstream or preparing the system for the conditions of having access to the structural funds, are much more difficult both in terms of reform strategies and policy making.

Recently the greatest external challenge to the educational systems that is on the agenda of a certain group of the CEE countries is the preparation to the accession to the European Union. These challenges can not be understood without a short detour to the European educational policy context.

The process of building a common European educational policy is at its very beginning. Education is still considered to be a national issue, therefore, the decision making procedures in the Union are based on the subsidiarity principle. Nevertheless, it does not mean that there are no Union level educational goals and tools deployed to serve them. These goals are mainly defined as responses to the challenges of other sectors and still, education is considered as one of the vehicles of the political and cultural integration of the European countries. This double role of education became important in the first part of the 70s when global economic challenges gave the integration a stimulus. The first Community level policies addressed the harmonisation of vocational training and the problems of travelling workers. The joint European educational information system, the EURYDICE was established in 1980.

The new wave of educational integration in the 80s was characterised by raising the level of co-operation to the level of governments, by the development of common priorities and by the setting aside of the budget that serves Community action. Since then, the main feature of the European educational policy is the launching of targeted projects that generate innovation in the educational systems of the member states according to the common objectives of the Community. The major programs that were launched in the second part of the 80s were the COMMET, ERASMUS, YOUTH FOR EUROPE, LINGUA and the TEMPUS programs. (Halász, 1998)

In 1991 the Maastricht treaty laid down the objectives of the Union actions in general education. (The only field, where the "Community policy" phrase is used is vocational training.) These objectives are the following:

- development of the European dimension in education (first of all by teaching and spreading the languages of the member states);
- fostering the mobility of students and educators;
- supporting co-operation among educational institutions;
- exchange of information and experiences about key matters of education of the member states;
- exchange programs for youth and "socio-educational instructors".

According to these objectives new Union programs were launched in 1995: the SOCRATES Program for general education, the LEONARDO Program for vocational training and the YOUTH FOR EUROPE Program. (These programs became accessible for the associated CEE countries, too.)

In negative terms, the policy of the Union in the education sector can be characterised by the lack of standardisation of educational regulation. Even after the Maastrict treaty the Union remains passive in institutionalisation of a common educational policy. Nevertheless, at the middle of the 90s two major changes strengthened the European policy dimension: the development of a shared holistic educational vision, which is based on the life-long learning paradigm, and the increased weight of educational measures in labour, social and other policies.

Actually, this period of "mid-way integration", in which the diversity of educational systems and policies within the Union is still a major obstacle to further steps in strengthening the role of community level policy, allows time and space for the CEE countries for a more gradual adjustment process than in other sectors. During this period, the participation of these countries in the euro-programs generates a kind of learning process, by which the culture, the procedural rules and co-operation technics become accessible. Probably this learning process is equally important as the real objectives of these programs and the projects that are funded by them. In the meantime, preparation for the accession in the education sector – apart from the problems that are connected to the free flow of labour - does not impose a serious direct adjustment or harmonization challenge.

Recently the indirect challenges of the accession seem to be much more important, and in prospective will exert a huge influence on the educational policies of the countries in the region. These challenges are having access to the structural funds of the Union and the educational policy paradigm that underpin the usage of these funds.

Since 1998, the most important source of financial means, which will be available for the CEE countries after the accession, the European Social Fund is closely connected to the European labour policy. This policy increasingly focuses on the usage of active training based tools. Taking into account the financial plans of the Agenda 2000 and the experiences of the countries that had access to the structural funds in an earlier period (such as Ireland, Greece and Portugal), the annual amount of financial resources that possibly will be available for human resources development can exceed the 1 percent of the GDP of the "accession countries". (Halász, 1999.) Even if

we assume that about the half of this sum will be used for development within the educational sector, this might be a significant increase of the educational expenditure of the first round admitted countries. If these countries would like to make the best of this opportunity they should prepare for serious adjustment. Expanding and generalising the recommendations of Gábor Halász there are several requirements that CEE countries should prepare for in order to gain support from the structural funds. Some of these requirements refer to the strategic framework of educational policy, while others are referring to policy making and implementation. (Halász, 1999.)

In terms of educational strategy the implications of this preparation process that should be taken into account are the following:

- Since the development of human resources is more and more in the heart of the Union's structural policy, CEE countries should elaborate their own human resource development strategies. In these strategies the role and objectives of educational development should be clearly defined.
- This will enforce the – in the CEE countries still missing – co-operation among the sectors that have a stake in human resource development: economy, social affairs, labour, regional development and education.
- This intersectoral co-operation means, that even the narrowly defined educational goals should be reconsidered and reformulated in a much broader conceptual framework. Educational strategies should be reoriented from schooling to (life-long) learning, that is, a holistic approach should be applied to general education, vocational training, higher education and adult learning.
- The development objectives of the education sector primarily should serve the economic competitiveness of these countries and the social cohesion within these countries.
- The desired outcomes and policy expectations towards the different levels and types of formal schooling should be adjusted to the objectives of the broad learning opportunities centred strategy.

The implications of the preparation process for policy making are the following:

- Due to the important role of grant giving financing methods in the structural funds supported programs, the increased absorption capacity of educational institutions is an outstanding condition. A wide range of tools should be used in order to make these institutions capable of developing and running projects that fit into the strategic goals of these programs.

- Since structural funds are available only if they are matched with internal resources, the structure of educational expenditure should be reconsidered. For example, additional, non-state budget sources should be explored. Also, the procedures and rules of internal grant giving systems should be gradually adjusted to those within the Union. Among others, mandatory evaluation of projects should be gradually prescribed.
- The planning capacity within the ministries of education and at the lower levels of educational management should be strengthened.
- The involvement of social partners (both in development and implementation of the different programs) is a sine qua non condition of having access to structural funds.
- The negotiation, communication and co-operation capacity of ministries of education and at the lower level educational management should be strengthened.
- An effective monitoring system should be created. It requires the extended use of advanced ICT supported information systems and fostering the creation of independent enterprises and organisations that are able to provide evaluation and monitoring.
- The programs supported by the structural funds use the combination of top-down and bottom-up tools. Therefore, in decentralised systems accountability should be strengthened, in centralised systems the usage of bottom-up implementation tools (such as grant giving financing) should be initiated.
- An institutionalised system of regional development planning should be created. (In the countries, where this has already started, such as the Czech Republic and Hungary, it generated a public administration reform snow-slide.) The connection between educational planning and the other components of regional development planning should be strengthened.
- Decisions should be decentralised to that level, where the devices of control are given.

If we compare all these educational strategy and policy related challenges with the earlier mentioned requirements of the creation of a "policy friendly" systemic environment, we can draw the conclusion that (in medium term in the case of first-round accession countries and in longer term in the case of second-round accession countries) probably the preparation for the accession might be one of the most powerful driving forces of change in the region.

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